Commentary

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The Rushdie Affair

Daniel Pipes • Midge Decter

Writing as a Jew
Hanoch Bartov

A Limit to Affirmative Action?
James Blanton

Tolstoy and the Pursuit of Happiness
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Kaplan's Big Deal—A Story
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Where Philosophy Matters
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Books in Review: Scott McConnell/Jonathan Rosen/Barry R. Gross/ Richard John Neuhaus/Peter Brimelow

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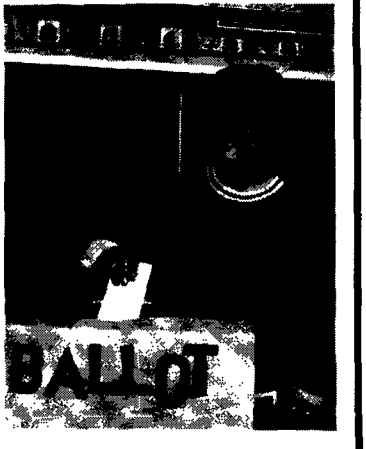

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Letters from Readers

The Democrats

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In his powerful, frequently persuasive, and always well-documented article, "Why the Democrats Lost Again" [February], Joshua Muravchik stresses the Democrats' need "to push the party back toward the Center," if they are ever to win the presidency again. In his words:

> The McGovernites transformed the party by waging an impassioned struggle on behalf of deeply felt causes—antiwar, affirmative action, reform. They will only be beaten by Democrats who believe just as passionately in other causes: freedom abroad, equal rights (not preferential treatment) at home, a strong defense, and renewed respect for such "middle-class" values as keeping murderers locked up in prison.

In recent election campaigns, however, people have complained about having to choose between political "clones," between Tweedledum and Tweedledee. Since Mr. Muravchik evidently is a Democrat, my question to him is this: on which issues that are important to voters would the causes and policies he would advocate for the Democrats, in order to win, *differ* from the causes and policies presently pursued by the Republican party under President Bush? His article contains scarcely a clue. It is easy enough, of course, to fault an author for what he neglects to say. But this omission seems to be rather crucial.

There are three additional "image" factors which, I believe, may also help to explain the Bush victory: Bush looked "presidential" (Dukakis did not); Bush was an authentic war hero (Dukakis was not); and last, but not necessarily least, Bush is a traditionally "American" name (Dukakis, obviously, is not).

SAMUEL RABINOVE
White Plains, New York

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Although I agree with some of what Joshua Muravchik wrote and especially with his caustic comment about the "critical detachment toward one's country" of some liberals, I must strongly dissent from his evident view that the Dukakis campaign itself had no significant impact on the outcome of the election. In fact, I contend that Dukakis's belief, at the start of the campaign, that running as a liberal would be political suicide destroyed what was at the time a reasonable chance of victory. Since the Democratic party will be the more liberal party for a long time to come, the question is of more than academic interest.

By denying his liberalism, and actually trying to keep ideology completely out of his campaign, Dukakis rendered himself helpless in the face of Bush's attacks. For most of the campaign he looked like a boxer who, while absorbing a fearful beating, almost never tries to throw a punch in return, but contents himself with covering up, trying to dance away, and complaining to the referee that he is being hit below the belt. In short, he looked like a loser, and most Americans simply do not want a loser as President.

Dukakis should have stated at the outset that he was a liberal. Yes, he would have had to express disagreement with parts of what is perceived to be the liberal line, and he would also, in view of his past record, have had to admit holding some unpopular views and as a result taken some lumps. But those were lumps he took anyway, so they would not have represented an additional loss.

At the same time, he could have emphasized the favorable aspects of liberalism . . . in order to deal with Bush's very unflattering version. He could also have called Bush a conservative, and reminded the voters that there are many aspects of conservatism that are unpopular. By thus forcing Bush to make some unwelcome choices, he could have put him on the defensive at least once in a while. . . .

Late in the campaign Dukakis began to do some of these things, and polls show that he gained a little. Had he proceeded in this way from the start, he surely would have done better. . . . It is impossible to say whether he would have won, but since he got 46 percent of the vote as it is, does it make sense to dismiss the possibility out of hand?

In saying that Dukakis might have won in spite of his ideological handicaps, I do not of course negate Mr. Muravchik's major point, which is that the Democrats would

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have been better off not having those handicaps in the first place. But though I agree that liberalism (and the Democratic party) can use an ideological face-lift, . . . a good deal of what I understand Mr. Muravchik to be saying strikes me as both politically unwise and completely out of line.

To put it bluntly, I resent the implication that since I condemn the shameful (and probably intentional) waste of money by the Reagan administration on things that do not work, or become obsolete too soon, or are ridiculously expensive, I must be against a "strong defense," and that since, for factual reasons, I believe that the *contras* are not an adequate vehicle for bringing freedom to Nicaragua, I do not believe in "freedom abroad."

To earn my support, those who wish to change the direction of the Democratic party will have to do better than that.

SAMSON M. ROSENZWEIG
North Brunswick, New Jersey

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Being a traditional liberal, I agree with Joshua Muravchik that the Democrats should "examine their ways" and make some basic changes if they want to win the White House in the foreseeable future. But I cannot accept the view that Dukakis's liberalism was the sole source of his defeat. Consider the survey data offered by Mr. Muravchik: (1) a Louis Harris summer poll showed only 13 percent for a liberal as President, yet Dukakis got 46 percent of the votes cast; (2) the New York *Times* poll showed 15 percent for a liberal President, yet Dukakis carried New York; (3) Dukakis lost by 8 points, but two weeks before the election he was 12 percent behind. Further, Dan Quayle, a paleoconservative, should have helped Bush but did not. And of course if 90 million eligible voters abstained, then it was either because liberalism and conservatism were both irrelevant labels, or else because the perceived character of the candidates turned the 90 million off.

But what accounted for Dukakis's gaining on Bush, despite the perception of Dukakis as a liberal? It is only a guess, but two possibilities seem plausible: (1) the new Dukakis, now campaigning in shirtsleeves, with loosened tie and freer gestures, struck many people for the first time as a fighter; (2) many voters (though not enough) realized that Dukakis was no doctrinaire extremist, *à la* McGovern, but rather an avowed internationalist, some of whose comments on the Soviet empire a few years ago were Jacksonian—and I mean Henry, not Jesse.

Unfortunately for Dukakis, because of liberaloid follies like furloughing Willie Horton, and because he did not have enough time remaining to change a few million people's view of him as a smug . . . wimp, he lost what he might perhaps have won, since, as Mr. Muravchik noted, Bush had "unusually high negatives" despite all his seeming advantages. . . .

Was it the son of Heraclitus who said, "A man's perceived character is his fate"?

BERNARD ADELMAN
Winthrop, Massachusetts

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Joshua Muravchik's article is the most accurate and complete account of the 1988 election to date. It is assigned reading in my political-sociology class.

There is one matter, however, that needs clarification. Mr. Muravchik quite rightly points out that the ACLU is a politically partisan organization, dedicated to

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"Left-liberal advocacy." But when he says that it "once was" a principled organization, he gives sustenance to the myth that there are two ACLU's—the old (politically neutral) and the new (politically partisan).

As I detailed in my book, *The Politics of the American Civil Liberties Union* (Transaction Press, 1985), the ACLU was founded in 1920 to serve the interests of the militant Left. Its founder, Roger Baldwin, made no bones about it. For example, in its first twenty years, the ACLU never protested Prohibition, worked against the Wagner Act (calling it "fascism"), declined to defend the free speech of employers, never listed freedom of religion as one of its original goals (though all the other liberties that inhere in the First Amendment were mentioned), and threatened a libel suit against the *American Mercury* magazine for publishing an article critical of the organization. In addition, Baldwin traveled to the Soviet Union and defended repression under Stalin as a "weapon of struggle in a transition period to socialism."

It is true that between 1940 and 1967 the ACLU grew considerably more moderate, thus qualifying as a somewhat nonpartisan organization. But what is interesting about those years is that they constitute the precise period in the ACLU's history when Communists were barred from serving on its governing boards. Ever since 1967 it has been evident that the ACLU has returned to its founding principles, namely, the cause of the liberal-Left. Only more so, for today's ACLU is more extremist than ever.

Thus there are really three ACLU's: the politically driven founding period (1920-40), the nonpartisan chapter (1940-67), and the return to radicalism (1967 to the present).

WILLIAM A. DONOHUE
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Permit me to add something to Joshua Muravchik's analysis. The New York *Times* in a news story dated January 22, 1989 printed some salient remarks made by John Sasso, vice chairman of the Dukakis campaign, to an audience at the World Trade Center in Boston the day before. It was Sasso's assessment of the interaction of Jesse Jackson with Dukakis and his managers—one of many campaign failures he addressed—that caught my eye. Sasso remarked that "covering up sharp disagreement . . . was corrosive and draining to both sides." . . . He went on to say that "Jesse Jackson himself says he wants to be treated only as other political leaders are treated. He is right. He should be, and he is not."

I wondered where I had heard all this before, and then I remembered. In a published interview on April 27, 1986 Walter Mondale said the following: "I recognize that [Jackson] was the first significant black candidate for President and I thought that he had to be dealt with with dignity and respect and I did. But that was not reciprocated and it hurt my candidacy. . . . This next time he has to be treated like all the other candidates, no worse, no better. . . . "

When will the Democratic leadership wake up to the detrimental presence of Jackson as a candidate? He never quits, though he is soundly defeated. Instead, as though victorious, he takes a busload or planeload of reporters and supporters around the country glorifying himself—for his future 1992 campaign. With his good friend and former convention floor manager Ron Brown now chairman of the national Democratic party, he has got a giant-step advantage over any future candidates, though Brown claims he will be the epitome of neutrality from now on. The 1984 campaign suffered a huge defeat and Jackson was a major cause. At least John Sasso was honest in recognizing this, . . . but no one in his organization seemed to remember Mondale's assessment in 1986, not even Sasso himself. . . .

What do the Democratic leaders plan to do about this major problem of a candidate who will not quit even in stark defeat? Is Jesse Jackson always to be the "great untouchable"? . . . It must be said very clearly: the issue is not his race, it is the man himself.

EUGENE W. FELDMAN
Lewistown, Pennsylvania

JOSHUA MURAVCHIK writes:

Samuel Rabinove puts a good question. Since I applaud many of the things done by the Reagan administration, it is hard for me to propose a Democratic platform that would make a stark contrast. But I am not sure that the Democrats need a stark contrast. Tweedledum and Tweedledee is not in fact a recent complaint, but one more often heard twenty-five years ago, when it was lodged by Republicans against other Republicans, arguing that their party could not win if its program was too similar to the Democrats'. But this is not the problem facing the Democrats today. Given a choice between fairly indistinguishable candidates, the voters, for reasons of class and habit, are prone to choose the Democrat. The Democrats' heritage as the party of the common man not only gives them a direct electoral advantage, it also leaves them better placed to address certain issues—for example, equal rights at home and the democratic cause abroad. Under the impact of McGovernism, however, the Democrats abandoned their natural turf to the Republicans. Should they ever succeed in reclaiming it, it might again be the Republicans who suffer from the need to differentiate themselves from the Democrats.

Samson M. Rosenzweig's arguments are quite reasonable in isolation, but they elide recent political history. Of course the label "liberal" is not intrinsically damaging. Since the 1970's, however, it has come to be associated with various deservedly unpopular causes: weak national defense, reverse discrimination, and solicitude for violent criminals, for example. Had Dukakis been able to present himself as the second coming of Harry Truman he might have won, but his own record showed, as Bush spared no effort to remind the voters, that he was a liberal of a more up-to-date sort.

Mr. Rosenzweig's concluding complaint perfectly illustrates this elision. Of course to oppose inefficiency by the Defense Department is not to oppose defense. But let us recall that in the 1960's and 1970's many of our public figures condemned America's foreign "adventurism" and our "war machine" and demanded defense cuts in the name of "reordering priorities." Now, without skipping a beat, many of the same voices demand defense cuts in the name of strengthening defense by eliminating waste. The voters should be forgiven if they receive such appeals with a grain of salt; indeed, they should be encouraged to do so.

I agree with Bernard Adelman that Dukakis's liberalism was not the sole cause of his defeat, but I suspect it was sufficient cause. And whatever denunciations of the Soviet empire Dukakis may have ut-

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tered (such denunciations are a kind of free ride often taken by the most dovish and isolationist of liberals), his foreign-policy views, to borrow Mr. Adelman's yardstick, were not at all closer to Henry Jackson's than to Jesse's. Consider that in the later primaries, Dukakis maintained that he and Jesse Jackson argued little because they disagreed little. Would Dukakis have said the same if his opponent had been not Jesse, but Henry, the Jackson who supported the *contras*, SDI, and large defense budgets, and who opposed the SALT II agreements?

I thank William A. Donohue for his comments and his description of ACLU history. I am more forgiving than he of the early political foibles of Roger Baldwin and colleagues. They were just a few of the many who made the intellectual journey from apologists for Communist barbarism to champions of freedom. My appreciation of their later contributions makes me all the more aghast at those who since the late 60's have led the organization back in the direction of its dubious past. In the decades before the *volte-face* the ACLU was not merely "more moderate" but a truly valuable institution.

My thanks as well to Eugene W. Feldman.

Montesquieu & the Jews

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Gertrude Himmelfarb's exploration of Jewish, Victorian, and capitalist ethics receives confirmation from a welcome direction ["Victorian Values/Jewish Values," February]. Long before Marx began fulminating about "the emancipation of mankind from Judaism" (Judaism understood as synonymous with huckstering, i.e., capitalism), and long before Beatrice Webb, that hybrid Victorian-socialist, spoke approvingly of the "Always Enlightened Selfishness" of the Jews, the French philosopher Montesquieu (1689-1755) had acknowledged—and in his understated way, celebrated—the Jewish role in the advent of modern capitalism.

In a chapter of *The Spirit of the Laws* entitled "How Commerce Broke Through the Barbarism of Europe," Montesquieu credits the Jews with the resuscitation of commerce in its revolutionary modern form. . . .

According to Montesquieu, the independence of commerce from theological-political control produces more than prosperity and material goods; it fosters tolerance and peace and humanity. . . .

Montesquieu concludes this chapter on the Jewish origins of capitalism with one of his most famous pronouncements: "We begin to be cured of Machiavellism, and recover from it every day. More moderation has become necessary in the councils of princes. What would formerly have been called a masterstroke of politics would be now, independent of the horror it might occasion, the greatest imprudence."

The subsequent history of this nobly liberal paragraph contains a painful irony: in the next century it served as the inspiration for Maurice Joly's *Dialogues in Hell between Machiavelli and Montesquieu*, a work attacking Louis Napoleon's policy of world domination by the transparent device of making Machiavelli its spokesman and Montesquieu its opponent. It was Joly's work which was then plagiarized to create the infamous hoax *The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion* (Machiavelli's parts went verbatim to the rabbis and Montesquieu's rebuttals were purged). *The Protocols* had considerable influence in stirring up anti-Semitic feeling both in Russia and Germany, where czarist pogroms and eventually Nazi death camps would prove Montesquieu to have been wrong in his prediction of safety for the Jews and the demise of Machiavellism. . . .

Beatrice Webb's point about the absence of "social morality" among the immigrant Jews also echoes Montesquieu, although he regarded this absence as characteristic of any commercial people. Unlike Marx, Montesquieu did not think Judaism was in essence capitalist; for instance, Montesquieu did not find the record of the ancient Jews as traders and merchants particularly distinguished. It was only in response to Christian persecution that the Jew became *homo economicus*. Here is how Montesquieu described the decent, but ungenerous ethos of capitalism: "The spirit of trade produces in the mind of a man a certain sense of exact justice, opposite, on the one hand, to robbery, and on the other to those moral virtues which forbid our always adhering rigidly to the rules of private interest, and suffer us to neglect this for the advantage of others." . . .

Already in his own day, Montesquieu regarded England (whose nobility, unlike that of other European powers, had entered into trade) as the exemplar of the modern commercial republic. The failure of the new arrivals in the 19th century to attain the heights of Mrs. Webb's "social morality" may be due, in part, to their having

THE JUDICIAL consensus in favor of *Roe* v. *Wade* has looked shaky ever since the confirmation of Justice Kennedy. Just six months ago, a pro-choice candidate and a pro-life candidate were running for President. The latter is in the White House. The former was sent back to Boston to hector people about seatbelts.

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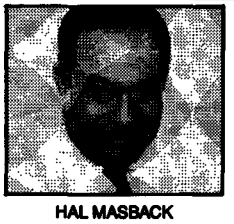

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imbibed "the general spirit" of the British nation more completely than either the remnant of tradition-sodden natives or the cell of Fabian reformers.

In Margaret Thatcher's Britain it seems the contest is no longer between a capitalist and an aristocratic ethic, but between capitalism and welfare-state socialism, the endowment of Mrs. Webb and her friends. . . . If Mrs. Thatcher succeeds in the daunting task of restoring the Victorian virtues, Montesquieu's assessment of the English will again be accurate: "They know better than any other people upon earth how to value, at the same time, these three great advantages—religion, commerce, and liberty."

DIANA SCHAUB
Washington, D.C.

Hemingway

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In "Hemingway: Portrait of the Artist as an Intellectual" [February], Paul Johnson writes: " . . . insofar as Hemingway had literary progenitors, it might be said he was the offspring of a marriage between Kipling and Joyce." This is bad genealogy.

In *The Green Hills of Africa*, Ernest Hemingway-as-narrator says: "All modern American literature comes from a book by Mark Twain called *Huckleberry Finn* . . . it's the best book we've had. All American writing comes from that. There was nothing before. There has been nothing as good since."

It is self-serving praise. Their styles are of a piece—simple, clean, disdainful of décor, and, surely not least, invested with a poker-faced humor that is America all over. These men celebrate doing, and that which is done out-of-doors above all. One could imagine a grown-up Huck Finn teaching Nick Adams how to fish.

Such similarities should not surprise. Consider the authors' common experiences: they both came from small towns in Mississippi River states and learned to hunt before they could read. They tasted war in their youths. They started writing as newspaper reporters. They traveled extensively throughout America and Europe. They lent their pens to political causes.

Moreover, the bond between them transcends stylistic affinity and the embrace of the wild. In Huck Finn's conscience, we find an analogue to the fabled "Hemingway code," a standard of personal integrity to be maintained no matter the price, through which men attain a low-key heroism. Just as Robert Jordan gives his life for a "free" Spain, Huck resolves to help Jim escape slavery, fully aware that the penalty will be "everlasting fire."

Mr. Johnson's only mention of Mark Twain occurs in a listing of eighteen authors whose work Hemingway had read. Surely that does not do justice to the one man who could be considered Papa's father.

J. KIRBY SIMON
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Paul Johnson has obviously confused Maxwell Anderson with Sherwood Anderson. Hemingway did quarrel, sooner or later, with almost everyone with whom he came into close contact, but if he had any close acquaintance with Maxwell Anderson, I have not run across it in any Hemingway studies.

On the other hand, Hemingway met Sherwood Anderson, then a leading literary figure, in Chicago at the home of Y.K. Smith in 1920-21 and remained in touch with him for many years. When he went to Paris he carried letters of introduction from Anderson with him, and he encountered Anderson again in Paris as part of the Stein circle. Hemingway ended the friendship by writing "The Torrents of Spring," a parody of Anderson.

EARL HILTON
Marquette, Michigan

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . Ernest Hemingway could not have supported Eugene V. Debs for President in 1932, as Paul Johnson says he did. Debs died in 1926 and last ran for President in 1920. Mr. Johnson meant to say Norman Thomas, of course—which would not have been so unusual among the literati in that year.

HASKELL ROSENBERG
Rochester, New York

Glasnost

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I recently had the chance quite incidentally to read Walter Laqueur's interesting article, "Glasnost & Its Limits" [July 1988], and a sampling of letters-to-the-editor on the same topic [November 1988]. I am sorry that my reaction comes so belatedly, but unfortunately COMMENTARY is not regularly available in Estonia.

I think Mr. Laqueur's article adequately identifies a number of key elements of *glasnost*, but it seems to me that certain aspects of it need to be presented in a more refined form. I think, too, that the real limits of *glasnost* in the USSR (especially taking into account the rapidly progressing situation in the Baltic republics) are broader than Mr. Laqueur's article suggests, though this may be partially due to the fact that the situation is changing every day.

It seems to me that there are at least two separate aspects of *glasnost* that should be more clearly defined: (1) *glasnost* as openness; and (2) *glasnost* as pluralism. The openness function may be contrasted with the secrecy and xenophobia that were essential features of Soviet society until very recently. The pluralism function may be contrasted with such previous Soviet practices as imposing total "unity" of opinion on all subjects, approaching all social issues from an ideological perspective, attributing to the working class or its party a total monopoly on the truth—an ability, somehow objectively granted, to understand the course of history better and more profoundly than anyone else.

In distinguishing between these functions, I do not want to say that *glasnost* has already done away with unnecessary secrecy and xenophobia in Soviet society, or that the USSR is already a land of ideological pluralism. But even though it has not gone that far, *glasnost* has completely changed the situation in these respects.

The issue of pluralism is very closely related to the question of the limits of *glasnost*. Here again we may tackle the problem on two levels: (1) the practical limits on what may be said publicly today in the USSR; and (2) the limits of "official thinking" (or the "party line") at the present moment.

So far as the first category goes, it is very difficult to see any limits at all (except as dictated by considerations of public health or morals) on what may be said today at public gatherings, in independent or semi-independent publications of all sorts, and so on. It is certainly possible to say publicly that socialism as a social system has failed, for example, or that the Baltic

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states should secede from the USSR.

This is not quite the case with "official thinking," as reflected in the speeches and reports of leading Communist party and government officials, or in articles in the government press. Here certain norms and limits clearly still prevail. For example, there have been frequent official pronouncements to the effect that the basic socialist values should not be abandoned; that there is no place for private ownership of the main means of production in Soviet society; that Marxist-Leninist ideology continues to be the basis for Soviet policy; that a multiparty system will not be introduced into Soviet society; that the unity of the USSR as a federation of states must be preserved.

The existence of certain limits and norms is, of course, a necesary and natural feature of any coherent political doctrine. But it is also natural to ask what could be done to develop *glasnost* further, in the sense of making "official thinking" more flexible. From my own purely personal point of view, what appears to be necessary is an official admission of the crisis of Soviet-style socialism. The concept of socialism itself requires a profound reinterpretation, and most of the basic Marxist-Leninist principles should be reexamined and retested. First of all, the priority of universal human rights over other types of rights, values, and interests should be stated more clearly. Secondly, there is no sound reason to deny that private ownership of the means of production (alongside other forms of ownership) may exist in a socialist society. Thirdly, the possibility of a multiparty system in the USSR (or at least in some Soviet republics) should be accepted. Finally, the principle that "there must be no areas closed to criticism" should be put into effect so that everything (including even the rationality of Lenin's political thinking) is open to critical discussion.

For *glasnost* to develop further, there must be further changes in Soviet thinking. But at the same time the very possibility of my raising the questions mentioned above is itself a sign of the profound effects that *glasnost* has already had in the Soviet Union.

ANDRUS PORK
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The Ayatollah, the Novelist, and the West

Daniel Pipes

TWICE now in the span of a decade, the Ayatollah Khomeini has challenged some of Western civilization's deepest values. In November 1979, by permitting a seizure of the American embassy, he violated the hallowed laws of Western diplomacy. Then, in February 1989, he struck again, this time against the concept of free speech, by calling for the murder of a British writer, Salman Rushdie, and of the publishers of Rushdie's most recent novel, *The Satanic Verses.**

So far as an outsider can tell, Khomeini issued his edict against Rushdie to strike a blow at what he sees as a threatening, secular West. The chief irony of the affair, therefore, is that Khomeini succeeded in demonstrating how few Western governments are prepared to stand up against him and for their own values. This Western weakness has implications that go far beyond the Rushdie case itself and that may be felt for years to come.

SALMAN RUSHDIE was born in 1947 in Bombay, India. He attended school in England, at Rugby, followed by King's College, Cambridge University, from which he was graduated in 1968. After spending two years in Pakistan, he returned to Britain, where he has lived ever since, becoming a British subject by marriage. For several years, Rushdie worked as a copywriter in a public-relations firm; then, in 1976, he published his first novel, *Grimus,* a work of science fiction. A second novel, *Midnight's Children,* came out in 1979, won the highly prestigious Booker Prize, and sold an impressive half-million copies. A 1981 novel, *Shame,* dealt with Pakistan.

The Iranian press has called Rushdie "a self-confessed apostate," but he is better described as a lapsed Muslim, and he makes no bones about it: "I do not believe in supernatural entities," he has said, "whether Christian, Jewish, Muslim, or Hindu." Though Rushdie is hardly alone in his views, what he stands for perturbs many Muslims. They are especially offended because he has renounced his ancestral country, language, and the Muslim way of life in favor of England, English, and secularism.

Yet while Rushdie has adopted England as his home, he has hardly taken it to his bosom. Thus in *The Satanic Verses,* the British immigration officials who arrest one of his characters behave like the goons of a police state, "thumping and gouging various parts of his anatomy" in such a way that the bruises will not show. As Cheryl Benard of the Baltzman Institute in Vienna concludes in a piece in the *Wall Street Journal,* it is not Muslims who come off the worst in Rushdie's vision: "It is Britons more than Muslims who might have cause to find [*The Satanic Verses*] blasphemous. If Islam is portrayed as somewhat rigid and medieval, then the contemporary West, in his pages, is a nightmare out of [the movie] *Blade Runner.*" New York City he calls "that transatlantic New Rome with its Nazified architectural gigantism, which employs the oppressions of size to make its human occupants feel like worms." In the cruder terms of one of his characters, the West comprises "the motherfucking Americans" and "the sisterfucking British."

This kind of thing notwithstanding, *The Satanic Verses* is an elusive and sophisticated tale, written by an accomplished novelist. Unfortunately, however, to assess its offensiveness in Muslim eyes, it must be looked at through those eyes—which is to say in a literal and anti-literary way. Specifically, to understand the book as many Muslims do, one must take every statement in it as representative of the author's own thinking, even though this is clearly not always the case.

The Satanic Verses is not easy to summarize. It contains three stories which at first glance may appear unrelated. The first concerns two Indians (Gibreel Farishta and Saladin Chamcha) who fall out of a jumbo jet and miraculously survive. Their adventures in England, their fantasy worlds, and their eventual return to Bombay make up the novel's central plot.

The second story is a dream about aspects of the life of the Prophet Muhammad, the founder

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* Viking Penguin, 547 pp., $19.95.

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of Islam. It relies partly on historical fact, partly on the novelist's imagination. The third story concerns a Muslim village in India whose entire population follows a holy woman into the Arabian Sea, expecting the waters will part for them to walk to Mecca. But the waters remain unparted, and virtually the whole village perishes. Juxtaposed as it is with a description of Khomeini's exile in Paris, this is clearly intended by Rushdie as an allegory of Iran and the Islamic revolution.

The dream about Muhammad is the source of the controversy. It makes up two chapters of the book, "Mahound" and "Return to Jahilia." (Mahound is an archaic and derogatory European name for the Prophet Muhammad; Jahilia, the Arabic word for "barbarism," is Rushdie's name for Mecca.) From the Islamic point of view, the most offensive passages are those referred to in the title, which have to do with the Satanic verses, a little-known but genuine issue in the history of Islam.

Before we look at the Satanic-verses episode, however, an important point needs to be established about the Islamic faith, namely, that its irreducible core lies in acceptance of the Qur'an (or, in the older transliteration, Koran) as the Word of God. At the very least, to be a Muslim means believing that God (Allah) sent His message to mankind via the angel Gabriel who passed it along to Muhammad; and that the Qur'an is inerrant. To doubt that the Qur'an is the exact message of God is to deny the validity of Muhammad's message and to imply that the entire Islamic faith is fraudulent at base. Therefore, such doubt is usually seen as an act of apostasy.

THE Satanic-verses episode stems from the fact that Muhammad was born and lived in Mecca, long a major center of the polytheistic Arabian religions. Indeed, the town's prosperity depended heavily on its role as a religious center, and the leaders of Muhammad's own tribe, Quraysh, depended especially on the local shrines.

The emphatic monotheism of Muhammad's message therefore posed a direct challenge to the existing order in general and to the leaders of Quraysh in particular. For this reason, in part, Muhammad's initial teachings, although they did succeed in attracting slaves, servants, non-tribal persons, and other riffraff, met with a poor response among the well-to-do in Mecca. Winning these over became a major concern of Muhammad. It was in this context that the Satanic-verses episode took place, in about 614 C.E., or one year after Muhammad began his career of public preaching.

According to al-Tabari (d. 923), a historian and commentator on the Qur'an who provides much of our historical knowledge about early Islam, the leaders of Quraysh suggested to Muhammad that he adopt a flexible attitude toward their idols, and they in turn would adopt a more friendly attitude toward his preaching. "If you make some mention of our goddesses, we would sit beside you [i.e., become Muslims]." Soon after this offer, Muhammad recited the following verse of the Qur'an, which makes reference to three of the most prominent Meccan goddesses:

> Have you thought upon Lat and Uzza,
> And Manat, the third, the other?*

At this point, according to the account in Tabari, Satan distorted the next words to make it appear that Muhammad was accepting the three goddesses and was confirming the validity of their intercession between man and God:

> These are the exalted birds,
> And their intercession is desired indeed.†

Naturally, Quraysh leaders were delighted by Muhammad's acceptance of the three goddesses, for it meant that Islam was neither as monotheistic nor as radical as it had first appeared. The traditional religions would live on, at least in an attenuated form; the shrines of Mecca would retain their economic value.

But then the angel Gabriel (the nominal source of the Qur'an) came to Muhammad and revealed to him that the devil had deceived him into uttering the last two lines: in Tabari's account, to be precise, Gabriel revealed that "Satan caused to come upon his tongue" the verse about "the exalted birds." Now Gabriel abrogated these lines, replacing them with verses denouncing the cult of the three goddesses.

The complete Qur'anic text on this issue reads as follows:

> Have you thought upon Lat and Uzza,
> And Manat, the third, the other?
> Shall He have daughters and you sons?
> That would be a fine division!
> These are but [three] names you have
> dreamed of, you and your fathers.
> Allah vests no authority in them.
> They only follow conjecture and wish-
> fulfillment,
> Even though guidance had come to them
> already from their Lord.

What happened to the two lines, "These are the exalted birds,/And their intercession is desired indeed"? Had Satan leaped onto and then off of Muhammad's tongue? Or had the Prophet tried to ingratiate himself with the city leaders, then regretted the effort and recanted? Or, worse, had he tried to win their favor, been rebuffed, and changed the text accordingly?

* The wording of the Qur'an used here is Rushdie's in *The Satanic Verses*; Rushdie writes that he relied on the N.J. Dawood and Muhammad Ali translations, adding "a few touches" of his own.

† These two lines, which lie at the center of the incident, are found in a wide range of Muslim sources, though their precise wording differs in each account.

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Obviously, this incident is one of the most delicate in Muhammad's mission. Here is how W. Montgomery Watt, the leading modern biographer of Muhammad, steers a neutral course in his summary of the incident:

> Muhammad must have had sufficient success for the heads of Quraysh to take him seriously. Pressure was brought to bear on him to make some acknowledgment of the worship at the neighboring shrines. He was at first inclined to do so, both in view of the material advantages such a course offered and because it looked as if it would speedily result in a successful end of his mission. Eventually, however, through divine guidance as he believed, he saw that this would be a fatal compromise, and he gave up the prospect of improving his outward circumstances in order to follow the truth as he saw it.

The phrase "as he believed" is Watt's way of avoiding a judgment of the issue. In other words, this is the territory of faith where the historian dares not tread. But the novelist does.

In Rushdie's novel, the Prophet speaks the false verses not because Satan puts them into his mouth, but because he sees an opportunity to advance his cause. Later, Mahound "returns to the city as quickly as he can, to expunge the foul verses that reek of brimstone and sulphur, to strike them from the record for ever and ever." To cover this deception, Mahound adopts the notion, suggested by one of his followers, that the devil made him do it.

But Rushdie's offense in this section goes beyond the charge that Muhammad weaved and bobbed as his interests changed; the real problem lies in the implication that the entire Qur'an derives not from God through Gabriel, but from Muhammad himself, who put the words in Gabriel's mouth:

> Gibreel [Gabriel], hovering-watching from his highest camera angle, knows one small detail, just one tiny thing that's a bit of a problem here, namely that *it was me both times, baba, me first and second also me.* From my mouth, both the statement and the repudiation, verses and converses, universes and reverses, the whole thing, and we all know how my mouth got worked.

This last point ("and we all know how my mouth got worked") refers to Gibreel's being forced to say what he does by Mahound. If this is true, then the Qur'an is a human artifact and the Islamic faith is built on a deceit. There is nothing left.

But is that what Rushdie has implied? The whole sequence, after all, is part of a dream; and the dreamer, Gibreel Farishta, is a man whose name means "Gabriel Angel" and who suffers from "paranoid delusions" of being the Archangel Gibreel. Surely this places the author at a considerable distance from the story he tells. Furthermore, other Muslims have written on Muhammad and the Qur'an in ways objectively more offensive to Islam than Rushdie, and they have been attacked far less. For example, 'Ali Dashti, an Iranian whose works were freely available after the Iranian revolution, is the author of an analysis of Muhammad's mission which includes such statements as this: "The Lord who made observance of ancient Arab lunar time-reckoning compulsory everywhere and forever must have been either a local Arabian god or the Prophet Muhammad."

Why then did Rushdie and his book so provoke the Muslims of England and South Africa, the Saudi authorities, mobs in Pakistan, and the Ayatollah Khomeini—especially as almost no one who protested the book had even read excerpts from it, much less the entire novel? The answer is that the title itself has an impact when translated into Arabic that it does not have in English. Here is Rushdie's understanding of the matter:

> Even the novel's title has been termed blasphemous; but the phrase is not mine. It comes from al-Tabari, one of the canonic Islamic sources. Tabari writes . . . [that] Muhammad then received verses which accepted the three favorite Meccan goddesses as intercessionary agents. Meccans were delighted. Later, the Archangel Gabriel told Muhammad that these had been "Satanic verses," falsely inspired by the devil in disguise and they were removed from the Koran.

Rushdie's account is generally correct—but he makes one mistake. The exact term "Satanic verses" is not found in Tabari. Tabari says: "Satan threw [something] into his formulation, and these verses were revealed." Admittedly, this is close in spirit to "Satanic verses," but it is not the same. The term "Satanic verses" is an English one, devised by Orientalists. When rendered into Arabic, the phrase becomes *Al-Ayat ash-Shaytaniya,* using a word for "verses" (*ayat*) which refers specifically to the verses of the Qur'an. Back-translated into English, therefore, the Arabic title would be "The Qur'an's Satanic Verses." And, with just a touch of imagination, that is easily rendered as "The Qur'anic Verses Written by Satan," or even "The Qur'an Written By Satan."

In other words, the book's title was not taken as referring to a bit of Islamic arcana concerning phrases not actually found in the Qu'ran. It was read as asserting that the Qur'an itself is the work of the devil—an assertion that Muslims found inconceivably offensive.

The uproar over *The Satanic Verses* began with the book's official publication date in Britain in late September 1988.

Indian Muslims had learned about the novel in mid-September from *India Today,* a biweekly magazine, which reviewed it, excerpted it, and interviewed the author. Presciently, the reviewer

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concluded that "*The Satanic Verses* is bound to trigger an avalanche of protests from the ramparts." And, indeed, Syed Shahbuddin, a member of the Indian parliament, not liking what he read in *India Today*, began a campaign to have the novel banned. He met with quick success, as the finance ministry prohibited distribution of the book on October 5, 1988.

Meanwhile, Muslims in Britain also tried to have it banned, but in their case without success; they then resorted to protest in the form of book-burning ceremonies. The first such burning of *The Satanic Verses* took place in Bolton (near Manchester) on December 2, 1988; it attracted a crowd of 7,000 Muslims but scant press attention. A second burning on January 14, 1989, in the heavily Muslim town of Bradford, the so-called capital of Islam in the United Kingdom, did bring out the cameras, which showed the auto-da-fé—the novel attached to a stake and set on fire—in loving, if horrified, detail.

All this proved merely a warmup for the round of violence that began in Islamabad, Pakistan, on February 12. The events of that day are clear, though their causes remain in dispute. A crowd of some 10,000 took to the streets and marched to the American cultural center, where they shouted "American dogs" and "God is great" and set fire to the building. Five demonstrators died at the hands of the police, and about a hundred were injured. A Pakistani guard at the American center was shot by someone in the mob, making him the sixth casualty of the day. The next day, a rioter lost his life in Kashmir, India.

The odd thing about these riots was that *British* property was not attacked, although the novel had been out for months in the United Kingdom, and Rushdie was living in London. This may have had to do with the forthcoming American publication of *The Satanic Verses*, scheduled for February 22. Or the violence may have been directed toward those in the Pakistani opposition who wanted to exploit the opportunity to attack Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto—and the United States makes a better symbol of protest than Great Britain. This, in fact, is the way the Prime Minister herself interpreted the riots. Similarly, Rushdie for his part accused the leaders of the demonstration of exploiting religious slogans for political ends.

In any event, by the middle of February *The Satanic Verses* had occasioned, or excused, substantial disturbances among Muslims in several parts of the world. But although the riots and loss of life attracted great attention, there was still no real political issue for the West to confront. It took the Ayatollah Khomeini, a man who does not play by the usual rules, to mount such a challenge.

Accounts differ as to how Khomeini learned about Rushdie and *The Satanic Verses*. One report says that he was watching a news program on Iranian television, saw the rioting in Pakistan, and was much affected by the scene. Indeed, it is hard to imagine a sight more compelling to Khomeini's sense of solidarity than that of Muslims crying "God is great" before proceeding to die outside an American cultural center. A second account has him hearing about the Pakistan riots from a small transistor radio he takes with him on his constitutionals. A third version has him "shaken utterly" upon reading excerpts from *The Satanic Verses* (presumably in Persian or Arabic translation, as Khomeini knows no English); the name Mahound is said to have been especially enraging to him.

However he may have learned about the book, on February 14 Khomeini took the single most important step of the entire incident when, in an address to "all proud Muslims of the world," he pronounced an Islamic legal judgment (a *fatwa*) against both Rushdie and his publishers:

> The author of *The Satanic Verses* book—which has been compiled, printed, and published in opposition to Islam, the Prophet, and the Qur'an—and all those involved in its publication who were aware of its content, are sentenced to death.

Khomeini called on Muslims to act quickly against Rushdie, and the President of Iran, Seyyed 'Ali Khamene'i, characterized Khomeini's statement as "an irrevocable dictum."

To make the assignment more attractive, the head of an Iranian charity organization offered $1 million to a non-Iranian assassin, and 200 million rials (almost $3 million at the inflated rate of exchange but just $170,000 on the parallel market) to an Iranian. The next day, the religious leader of Rafsanjan (hometown of 'Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, speaker of the Iranian parliament) offered another 200 million rials.

Members of the Iranian parliament expressed their support for Khomeini and their "divine anger" at Rushdie. The Iranian ambassador to the Holy See announced that he would "kill Salman Rushdie with his own hands" if he could. In Spain, the representative of the Islamic Revolution News Agency made the same promise (and found himself instantly expelled from the country).

More importantly, a number of groups sponsored by the Iranian government declared their determination to get Rushdie. Mohsen Reza'i, leader of the Islamic Revolution's Guard Corps, announced the readiness of his forces "to carry out the imam's decree." Interior Minister 'Ali Akbar Mohtashemi called on the terrorists of Hizbullah to carry out the execution, and the leaders of the Lebanese Hizbullah quickly vowed to do "all that's possible to have the honor." So did other Lebanese groups—including Amal, the Islamic Unification Movement, and the Islamic Jihad for the Liberation of Palestine. In addition, Ahmad Jibril's Popular Front for the Liberation of Pal-

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estine-General Command announced its intention to join the effort. The Revolutionary Justice Organization, going farther than the others, vowed to attack the British police, if necessary, on the way to an assault on Rushdie. Something of a rivalry soon developed among these groups: who would get to Rushdie first?

Then, on February 17, President Khamene'i of Iran announced that "the people might forgive" Rushdie if he repented. (Khamene'i added ominously: "In that case, the Americans themselves will kill him. They will not allow such a person to remain alive, to reveal their [conspiratorial] policies, and to bring disgrace upon them.") The next day, Rushdie did offer an apology, though a minimal one; it concerned only the effects of his writings, and not the writings themselves:

> As author of *The Satanic Verses,* I recognize that Muslims in many parts of the world are genuinely distressed by the publication of my novel. I profoundly regret the distress that the publication had occasioned to sincere followers of Islam. Living as we do in a world of many faiths, this experience has served to remind us that we must all be conscious of the sensibilities of others.

An Iranian news-agency report suggested that the apology, "though far too short of a repentance, is generally seen as sufficient to warrant his pardon by the masses in Iran and elsewhere in the world." But on February 19 Khomeini himself weighed in with an absolute rejection of Rushdie's statement and, indeed, of any act of contrition on his part. Khomeini also denied foreign reports that Rushdie's repentance would avert the "execution order" against him:

> Even if Salman Rushdie repents and becomes the most pious man of [our] time, it is incumbent on every Muslim to employ everything he has, his life and his wealth, to send him to hell. . . . If a non-Muslim becomes aware of his whereabouts and has the ability to execute him quicker than Muslims, it is incumbent on Muslims to pay a reward or a fee in return for this action.*

One might have expected the world to dismiss Khomeini's twisted edict as madness, root and branch. But one would have been wrong.

On the official level, to be sure, the Iranians found little support, even in the Muslim countries. The foreign ministers of the 44 states belonging to the Organization of the Islamic Conference, meeting on March 13-16 in Riyadh, adopted not the Iranian position on Rushdie but a more moderate Saudi one, which called for a ban on the book though not the death of its author:

> The conference declares that blasphemy cannot be justified on the basis of freedom of expression and opinion. The conference strongly condemns the book *The Satanic Verses,* whose author is regarded as a heretic. It appeals to all members of society to impose a ban on the book and to take the necessary legislation to ensure the protection of the religious beliefs of others.

Only the Libyan government publicly stood by the Ayatollah and his edict.

On the popular level, by contrast, anti-Rushdie violence by Muslims showed that Khomeini enjoyed a great deal of support. In the Indian subcontinent the violent demonstrations that began on February 12 continued for a month. The largest number of deaths in a single incident occurred on February 24, when rioting in Rushdie's hometown of Bombay turned into a three-hour battle between the police and fundamentalist Muslims. The rioters burned cars, buses, and even a small police station. In response, the police killed twelve persons, detained 500, and arrested 800. On March 4, thousands of Pakistani demonstrators ransacked part of the Karachi airport in protest against the Rushdie novel, smashing doors and looting the VIP lounge; this was their way of welcoming home from Iran the pro-Khomeini Shi'i leader, Sajad 'Ali Naqvi. Naturally, the Iranians gloried in these demonstrations, calling them a "manifestation of Muslim power throughout the world" and "symptoms of this very majesty."

Confronted with such emotion, many leaders in Muslim countries sought to avoid the whole issue. They did not refer to it in public and they instructed their media to cover the controversy without comment. "I don't care to comment about the action of the government of Iran myself," was King Hussein of Jordan's reply to a question on the subject.

From the vantage point of governments wishing to stay out of the picture, the easiest, least worrisome step was to proscribe the book and say no more. Indeed, with the exception of the Philippines, few non-Western governments containing substantial Muslim populations resisted Saudi and Iranian pressure to ban *The Satanic Verses,* and many banned all books put out by Viking Penguin, Rushdie's publisher. Even in Israel, the Ministry of Religious Affairs requested that the Keter publishing house drop its plans for a Hebrew translation.

As for the non-Muslim governments of the West, which after all had both the responsibility and the means for protecting the rights of those threatened by Khomeini, they responded in particularly timorous fashion. In Britain, both Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and the leader of the opposition, Neil Kinnock, kept silent about the Ayatollah's threat for a full week. The newly-installed American Secretary of State, James A. Baker 3d, could muster no stronger

* The last sentence repudiated President Khamene'i's statement of two days earlier that "there is really no need for setting aside any money" for Rushdie's execution.

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condemnation than to call the death threat "regrettable." The Canadian government temporarily banned imports of *The Satanic Verses;* worse, Ottawa finessed the freedom-of-speech issue by relegating the decision to Revenue Canada, a tax agency. Bonn called the incident a "strain on German-Iranian relations." But it was the Japanese government that produced the most spineless formulation of all: "Mentioning and encouraging murder," it intoned, "is not something to be praised."

Several governments—including the British, French, and Soviet—sought a way out of the diplomatic impasse by noting that Khomeini's edict had been issued not by the Iranian government but by the "spiritual leader" of the Islamic revolution. Yet ten years of experience had shown this distinction to be utterly spurious, and in any case the entire machinery of the Iranian government had rushed to endorse Khomeini's action.

Finally, on February 20, the foreign ministers of the Common Market agreed on a strong statement:

> The Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the twelve member states of the European Community, meeting in Brussels, discussed the Iranian threats and incitements to murder against novelist Salman Rushdie and his publishers, now repeated despite the apology made by the author.
>
> The ministers view those threats with the gravest concern. They condemn this incitement to murder as an unacceptable violation of the most elementary principles and obligations that govern relations among sovereign states. . . .
>
> The ministers of the twelve decided to simultaneously recall their Heads of Mission in Teheran for consultations and to suspend exchanges of high-level official visits.

Yet not even the British government—which was the most centrally involved of the twelve—went so far as to break diplomatic relations with Iran, though it did demand that all Iranian representatives leave London, and withdrew all its personnel from Teheran. Observers could recall no precedent for maintaining diplomatic relations without personnel; the British move was understood as a way of expressing strong displeasure and regret simultaneously, and thereby signaling that normal relations could be rebuilt as soon as Khomeini's edict was retracted. But far from retracting, the Iranians passed a bill that stipulated a complete break on March 7 unless the British government declared "its opposition to the unprincipled stands against the world of Islam, the Islamic Republic of Iran, and the contents of the anti-Islamic book, *The Satanic Verses.*"

Prodded by feelers from Iranian "pragmatists," British leaders did what they could to satisfy Teheran. On March 2, Foreign Secretary Sir Geoffrey Howe went on the BBC World Service to show foreign listeners that his government wished to distance itself from Rushdie:

> We understand that the book itself has been found deeply offensive by people of the Muslim faith. It is a book that is offensive in many other ways as well. We can understand why it could be criticized. The British government, the British people, do not have any affection for the book. The book is extremely critical, rude about us. It compares Britain with Hitler's Germany.* We do not like that any more than the people of the Muslim faith like the attacks on their faith in the book. So we are not co-sponsoring the book. What we are sponsoring is the right of people to speak freely, to publish freely.

Two days later, Prime Minister Thatcher made similar remarks.

THE Iranians acknowledged these gestures but demanded practical measures as well, such as the legal prosecution of Rushdie, confiscation of copies of *The Satanic Verses,* and an injunction against further publication of the book. These steps the British authorities did not even consider undertaking; so, as threatened, Teheran broke relations on March 7, in some of the most unusual language and reasoning to be found anywhere in international diplomacy. The Iranian statement noted that "in the past two centuries Britain has been in the frontline of plots and treachery against Islam and Muslims," and it went on to provide details about the behavior of perfidious Albion in Palestine, Iraq, Pakistan, and elsewhere. It alleged, too, that having suffered severe reverses at the hands of Islamic movements, London was now dropping its old military tactics and resorting to more sophisticated political and cultural weapons—such as sponsoring *The Satanic Verses.* But the Islamic Republic would not tolerate this plot, and was therefore breaking relations with the United Kingdom. A Teheran daily suggested that the break could easily last "at least a decade."

In retaliation, the British government closed down the Iranian consulate in Hong Kong and expelled nine Iranians resident in the United Kingdom. The Foreign Office also urged British nationals to stay away from Lebanon. Further, the Foreign Secretary, using his strongest language since the controversy began, called the Iranian government a "deplorable regime" and (for the first time) condemned its recent "mass exterminations."†

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* Howe was wrong; the only passage that invokes Nazi Germany comes in reference to New York City, as noted above. Rushdie contested Howe's characterization, challenging the Foreign Secretary to produce the offending sentence.

† Those "exterminations" having taken place up to half a year earlier, many commentators found it unfortunate that the condemnation had to wait until diplomatic relations had been broken

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For all the animosity between the two states, however, neither side made a move to interfere with existing trade relations. The British continued to purchase Iranian crude oil, the Iranians continued to purchase a wide array of British goods; and such official British services as the Export Credits Guarantee Department (which provides short-term cover for British exports) witnessed a "fairly busy, regular market." Meanwhile, an official of the Foreign Office, William Waldegrave, went on the BBC's Arabic Service to put

> on record that the British government well recognizes the hurt and distress that this book has caused, and we want to emphasize that because it was published in Britain, the British government had nothing to do with and is not associated with it in any way. . . . What is surely the best way forward is to say that the book is offensive to Islam, that Islam is far stronger than a book by a writer of this kind.*

Radio Teheran counted this admission as a major step forward from the Howe and Thatcher statements. But Iran made no concessions in return.

Exactly one month after the decision to withdraw top diplomats of the EEC from Iran, the foreign ministers met again and decided, under Greek, Irish, and Italian pressure, to send them back. Khomeini described the Europeans as returning in "shame, abjectness, and disgrace, regretting their deed." Lamely, the French foreign ministry called this an "exaggeration."

Why did Ayatollah Khomeini make an international incident of *The Satanic Verses*? Curiously, critics and supporters of the Ayatollah offered diametrically opposed explanations.

Critics were nearly unanimous in seeing his act in political terms. Former Iranian President Abolhassan Bani-Sadr saw the *fatwa* as "a political affair and not a religious one," and the leader of the main Iranian opposition group, the Mujahidin-e Khalq, agreed.

Some emphasized domestic political tensions in Iran. Amir Taheri, author of *Holy Terror: Inside the World of Islamic Terrorism*, saw in *The Satanic Verses* "an issue likely to stir the imagination of the poor and illiterate masses" in Iran. Harvey Morris of the (London) *Independent* interpreted Khomeini's edict as a "revolutionary *coup de théâtre*" intended to replace the Iraq-Iran war as a focus of national unity. Other commentators emphasized foreign-policy aspects. Youssef M. Ibrahim of the New York *Times* explained Khomeini's edict as a bid "to reassert his role as spokesman and protector of Islamic causes." William Waldegrave of the British Foreign Office blamed the incident on "radical elements in Iran, which do not want their country to have normal relations with the West and the Gulf states."

Supporters of the Ayatollah, on the other hand, read his move very differently, and primarily as a religious response. The Iranian chargé d'affaires in London stated unequivocally that to Khomeini the punishment of Rushdie was "much more important than relations between two countries." And the top Iranian diplomat in Cyprus told a local audience that "the verdict issued by the Iranian leaders is a purely religious one and based on religious considerations."

Which side is correct? *Prima facie*, there is strong evidence for the religious interpretation. First, the Muslims in India, Great Britain, and Pakistan who took to the streets before Khomeini spoke had no connection with the internal struggles of Iranian political life, and it was surely their actions that exerted so powerful an effect on the aged leader.

Second, there were and are more direct ways for Khomeini to shut down relations with the West or to exclude those he calls liberals from power in Iran. As an autocractic leader, he rules without rival; had he decided to stop the improving ties, he could simply have so decreed. A politician in his position of authority need not take the extreme step of placing a bounty on a novelist's head.

Third, Khomeini generally means what he says, and says what he means—despite a persistent tendency both in Iran and in the West not to take his assertions at face value. In 1978, as Iranians and others tried to foresee what kind of government the Ayatollah would impose in Iran, the evidence that was plain to see in his writings over many years tended to be ignored in favor of a more conventional interpretation of his goals. Today, the insistence on a political explanation for the Rushdie *fatwa* risks falling into the same error.

Finally, the attack on Rushdie is consistent with other actions by the Ayatollah, two of which deserve mention. He took nearly the same step forty-seven years earlier, when he was still an obscure mullah. In 1942 Khomeini wrote *The Discovery of Secrets*, a polemic directed against Ahmed Kasravi, a prominent writer whose anticlerical views had gained a significant following in Iran. Khomeini pronounced Kasravi *mahdurr ad-damm* ("forfeit blood"), thus permitting any Muslim to execute him. His book was read by Muhammad Nawab-Safavi, who went on to found a terrorist group, the Fedayin-e Islam, and this group attacked Kasravi with knives, murdering him. Though Khomeini's response to the execution is not on record, his close friend, Shaikh Sadeq Khalkhali, remembers it as "the most beautiful day in my life."

Much more recently, Khomeini inflicted severe punishments on the producers of a Teheran Radio program entitled "Model for the Muslim Wom-

* Only the Swedish government, whose ambassador to Teheran called *The Satanic Verses* "blasphemous," went further to satisfy Iranian demands.

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an." On January 28, 1989 they aired what the Ayatollah called "an un-Islamic interview": a woman on the program said that she did not consider Fatima, the daughter of the Prophet Muhammad, to be a suitable model for herself, and claimed to prefer a more up-to-date exemplar—the heroine of a Japanese soap opera. Outraged, the Ayatollah sent a letter to the director of Iranian broadcasting, telling him that if the insult was deliberate, the offending parties would "undoubtedly" be condemned to death. Three days later, a court sentenced one of the producers to five years in jail, and two others to four years each and 50 lashes. And the court made clear that this relative leniency was due to an "absence of malicious intent" on their part; otherwise, all of them would have been sentenced to death. In the end they were pardoned, thanks in part to the intercession of Khomeini's daughter.

YET granted the offensiveness of Rushdie's (literally interpreted) text, the offensiveness of his (misunderstood) title, and Khomeini's religious extremism, it is still not clear why this book should have been made a top priority of the Iranian government. Here the reason would seem to lie in the strange vision of history held by Khomeini and other fundamentalist Muslims.

Their view is based on a kind of syllogism: strong Muslims live fully by the precepts of their faith; Muslims were once strong, but are now weak; therefore, Muslims are weak because they do not live in strict accordance with the Qur'an and the precepts of Islam. Were they to do so, it follows that they would regain the strength of centuries past. Khomeini's first goal, then, is to get Muslims to live fully by the law of Islam, the Shari'a.

But there is one great obstacle to achieving this: the seductive culture of the West, which for two centuries has been drawing Muslims away from strict adherence to the requirements of their faith. Hence Muslims must engage in battle against Western civilization. And a battle this is, for the West is not a passive purveyor of its own culture, but actively thrusts it on vulnerable Muslims. The West does so because it benefits by weakening Muslims; this allows it to plunder Muslim lands and hire believers as cheap laborers. 'Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, speaker of the Iranian parliament, explains the deep historical roots of the effort:

> From the day Western colonialists harbored the intention of colonizing the Islamic countries—or to be more precise, to demolish and create havoc in the Islamic world—they sensed that they must deal with something called Islam. They realized that as long as Islam is in force, their path will be a difficult one, or may be virtually closed off.
>
> Whoever is familiar with the history of colonialism and the Islamic world knows that whenever they wanted to get a foothold in a place, the first thing they did in order to clear their paths—whether overtly or covertly—was to undermine the people's genuine Islamic morals.

Of course, the imperialists could not entirely do away with Islam, so they did the next best thing, which was to emasculate the religion, reducing the faith to empty ceremonies devoid of real content. By 1978, ceremonial Islam (or "American-style Islam") prevailed at the state level everywhere in the world. But then, Rafsanjani continues, "with the advent of the Islamic revolution, pure Islam entered the scene, and all they had done became undone." The Iranians threatened to lead all Muslims (and other oppressed peoples) against the hegemony of the great powers, the United States and the USSR especially.

Seeing the danger Iran posed, the powers fought back, and continue to fight back. "All the West's plots," declares President Khamene'i, "are aimed at stopping Islam and the revolution from becoming a world model." That is why the Iranians, in turn, have to engage in combat with everything at their command.

According to the Iranian view, the war between Islam and "international blasphemy" has taken two main forms. First, the great powers put their agent, the Iraqi president, Saddam Hussein, up to a war which he obediently carried out against Iran. But this military aggression failed against the hard rock of Islamic fervor. "After ten years," says Interior Minister Mohtashemi, "the world gave up the hope of fighting Islam within Iran through military conflict."

Stumped, the Western governments next "summoned all their devilish experts and mercenaries to draw up anew a strategy against Islam." At the conclusion of all these efforts, "global arrogance" (as the Iranians put it) devised a plan—warfare conducted (again) on the level of culture. This effort, according to a commentary on Radio Teheran, would involve two stages. First, "the aim is to weaken the Islamic faith among Muslims, thereby secularizing Muslim societies; this is then followed by an expansion of [Western] influence and the ultimate plundering of those societies' vital resources."

Not for a minute, then, did Iranian authorities believe that *The Satanic Verses* had been written by a single author pursuing the whimsies of his own imagination. According to Rafsanjani, Muslims reading this book "will not see a mad Indian behind it; they will see Britain, Germany, France, and the United States." In picking Rushdie as the ostensible author, the Western intelligence services chose

> a person who seemingly comes from India and who apparently is separate from the Western world and who has a misleading name [i.e., a

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> Muslim name]. . . . All these advance royalties were given to that person.
>
> One can see that they appointed guards for him in advance because they knew what they were doing. . . . All this tells of an organized and planned effort. It is not an ordinary work. . . . I believe there has not previously been such a well-planned act as this.

The effort required five years and $1.5 million. British intelligence even managed to have *The Satanic Verses* introduced in Britain as "the book of the year."* Had Muslims not protested, it would have been made into a film.

But how, an outsider might ask, can this novel hurt Muslims? The answer is, by dishonoring their faith and their traditions. It hurts to be "ridiculed by world arrogance," and the resultant pain could turn Muslims against Islam. Fortunately for Islam, Muslims understood what was brewing, and showed, "with their rage," that they intended to stymie the plot against them. Their steadfastness stopped the cultural campaign in its tracks.

Thus, in the Iranian view, the Rushdie affair, undertaken by the West as an assault upon Islam, instead became the occasion of a major Islamic reassertion, and therefore a turning point in the fortunes of the faith. Even in Turkey, according to one newspaper editorial, where the government had been taking quiet but effective steps toward "ridding the country of Islam," the shock of *The Satanic Verses* awakened the true Muslims to the dangers in their midst.

Note that Iranian leaders speak always of "the West," or "global arrogance." They do not believe that British intelligence acted alone in putting Rushdie up to the job; as ever, the "little Satan" is seen as working hand-in-glove with the "big Satan," the United States. One Iranian government statement referred to the novel as a "provocative American deed," and called Rushdie "an inferior CIA agent." As Mohtashemi put it, "The book's author is in England, but the real supporter is the United States."

There is, of course, no small irony in identifying Rushdie with the American government. After all, Rushdie is a Muslim of Indian origins who lives in England and holds a British passport. Furthermore, he is widely known as a "man of the Left," who viscerally opposes the policies of the U.S. government. Indeed, he has written a screed against American policy in Central America entitled *The Jaguar Smile*. Yet in the minds of fundamentalist Muslims, anti-Westernism has a way of always turning into anti-Americanism. Britain may once have been the imperial overlord, but now it is nearly defanged; its military potential is all but gone. In contrast, Khomeini saw Americans ruling Iran from 1953 to 1978. Too, American culture, with its global impact, symbolizes the West. Whether Rushdie lives in London or New York City is a minor detail; the point is that the United States is the leader of the Western world, that lascivious place where attacks on the Prophet and the Qur'an are acceptable, even encouraged.

Demented as this conspiratorial theory may sound to us, when we consider the extent to which Western governments have backed down in the Rushdie affair, it is by no means self-evident that Khomeini was wrong from his point of view in making *The Satanic Verses* the launching pad for his latest battle against the West and its values.

Indeed, Khomeini's edict achieved something remarkable. Throughout the West (and in other regions, too), he instilled an unprecedented fear which affected public figures. Suddenly, such topics as Salman Rushdie, *The Satanic Verses*, Iran, and Islam took on a special delicacy and were subject to an informal censorship. In some cases, offending works of art were repressed; more often, private thoughts were simply not uttered.

In a temporary and partial way, then, Ayatollah Khomeini succeeded in imposing his will on the West. Is the power he achieved an aberration or the beginning of a subtle shift in norms? While it is too early to say, it is clear that the answer depends far more on us than on him.

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* This may refer obliquely to the fact that *The Satanic Verses* was shortlisted for the Whitbread and Booker Prizes, and that Home Secretary Douglas Hurd sat on the committee judging the 1988 Whitbread Prize (which Rushdie won).

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The Rushdiad

Midge Decter

EVEN in a public world as beset by chance and accident as ours, it is hard to think of an event more unexpected than the international literary-political brouhaha surrounding Salman Rushdie and his novel *The Satanic Verses* during the months of February and March 1989.

By now there must be very few literate people on the face of the globe who are unaware of at least some part of the Rushdie story: how after British publication in September 1988 of *The Satanic Verses* the book was declared a blasphemy and banned in several Islamic countries, such as Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, and was banned also in India and South Africa; how Muslims in Britain, particularly in Yorkshire, burned copies of the book in angry public demonstrations; how, when Viking Penguin announced the publication of an American edition, an angry Pakistani mob marched on the American cultural center in Islamabad and during the ensuing melee five of them were killed; how the rioting spread from Pakistan to India, in the end resulting in a total of nineteen dead and 150 or so wounded; how on February 14 the Ayatollah Khomeini joined the fray, sentencing Salman Rushdie to death and offering a reward of both money and heaven to whoever carried out the sentence; and how, finally, Rushdie was forced by this threat into hiding under the protection of the British authorities, where it seems likely he will have to remain for a very long time: given the state of things, even the Ayatollah's death may not make the world a much safer place for him.

What made the story so startling, of course, was the idea that a literary exercise could set off riots and a thoroughly believable death threat. In the United States, Viking Penguin had been geared up for a late February appearance of *The Satanic Verses*, replete with a promotion tour by the author and other standard publishing trappings. The first printing was to be 72,500 copies—not gigantic, but very hopeful for a long, complex, and highly allusive novel by a writer who, though not without many warm admirers, had not yet become a literary household fixture.

The sentence of death produced a rapid round of statements and announcements. On February 15, after receiving their eighth bomb threat in three months, and perhaps inclined now to take these threats even more seriously, Viking Penguin and Salman Rushdie issued a statement declaring that neither author nor publisher had intended any offense, that the publication of *The Satanic Verses* would proceed as planned, but that the author's promotional tour was being canceled. The Authors Guild issued a kind of boiler-plate statement supporting the right of authors everywhere to write without constraint. Waldenbooks and B. Dalton, the country's two largest bookstore chains, announced that while the novel would be sold from the stockroom on request, it was being removed from display. (The fact was that with nearly a week to go before the official publication date, there were barely any books left either to sell or to display because the supply was running out. If, then, it had been Khomeini's design to consign Salman Rushdie to outer darkness, he himself proved to be the most effective frustrator of his own purpose.)

IN HINDSIGHT—particularly when the events being reviewed happen very fast and at close proximity to one another—it is never easy to be certain which elements in a given sequence might have been cause and which effect. Within days, for instance, the literary community was up in arms on Rushdie's behalf and the bookstore chains relented and resumed displaying *The Satanic Verses*. It seems fairly obvious that the former was to a great extent responsible for the latter, B. Dalton and Waldenbooks having been granted no sympathy by the writers for their claim that they were concerned only for the safety of their employees.

On the other side, it is less certain what set the writers into almost unprecedentedly concerted motion—one has difficulty remembering when an issue has ever produced so widely and noisily delivered a consensus among the literary celebrityhood as did *The Satanic Verses*—but the temporizing of the two major bookstore chains had to

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have contributed to a concentration of the authorial mind. Considering how impassive Americans—very much including American writers and journalists—have been in the face of terrorism (who among them, for instance, could recite the name of a single American diplomat murdered by terrorist assassins?), the speed with which Salman Rushdie's champions got themselves organized was most impressive.

On February 17, the Anglo-American journalist Christopher Hitchens published an op-ed piece in the New York *Times* entitled "Now Who Will Speak for Salman Rushdie?" In it he scolded everyone—the clergy, the "anti-terrorist lobby," Viking Penguin, and people he referred to as "the usual literary lions"—for failing to rally against the forces of obscurantism. Hitchens's impatience was perhaps a function of inexperience: never previously having been in the forefront of rallies against the forces of obscurantism when these were embodied as Islamic terrorists, he may not have known how long it takes to organize such gestures of opposition. Conceivably Hitchens's piece itself made a contribution to the pressure on the literary community. As a regular columnist in the *Nation*, he has more than once claimed, and more than once been accorded, the role of righteous prod.

Nevertheless, it is hard to escape the speculation that the image of books still lying in their cartons in the stockrooms of the chainstores was for many writers the starkest and most energizing symbol of danger. To this William Safire, for one, bore explicit witness. In his New York *Times* column of February 20, he told of having once believed that modern mass-marketing techniques, such as the big chains were now using, would not only boost the sales of his own books but would "create a bigger pie for the whole range of literature in the U.S." But he had forgotten one essential thing, he said, of which the behavior of these chains over *The Satanic Verses* so valuably reminded him: namely, that the ability to distribute a book on a mass basis includes control of the decision not to distribute it at all.

In any event, when the now-mobilized combination of the American chapter of PEN (an organization of poets, essayists, and novelists currently presided over by Susan Sontag), the Authors Guild (the major American organization of professional writers), and Article 19 (a London-based group charged with keeping track of censorship around the world) held a meeting in New York City on February 22, it was not only a successful but a positively memorable event.

The meeting took place in a loft which seated 500 people. Every one of those seats was filled, while loudspeakers piped the proceedings to something like 3,000 more people huddled outside. The program consisted of readings from *The Satanic Verses* and a series of statements and greetings delivered by twenty-one prominent writers.* The press, including the daily papers, the newsweeklies, and the TV news and talk shows, would be abuzz for days and days.

In the preceding year, PEN, then under the presidency of Norman Mailer, had also held a stellar gathering in New York, a far larger one, dazzling for the sheer number of literary lights brought together in one room. But that gathering had been a year in the making, was international in scope, and, in keeping with the tradition of literary conferences, had been the occasion for a number of rather ugly quarrels. The Rushdie gathering was naturally very different. Called to express the solidarity of those present with a colleague in distress, it unavoidably had about it the kind of surface harmony associated with a memorial meeting.

Another kind of harmony settled on this meeting as well—the kind that writers, creatures of a permanent shortage economy, can never achieve among themselves but only in connection with a question arising between themselves collectively and their major collective tormentors, the booksellers. And in this case there were other parties in addition to Waldenbooks and B. Dalton that the writers could unite against. There was also the Bush administration, for failing to take immediate measures of retaliation against Iran; and there was the general class of enemies who go by such names as "zealots," "fanatics," and "fundamentalists."

In the end, the drama of Salman Rushdie and the Ayatollah was to play in the press for nearly a month, which is about the span of media attention usually accorded wars, peace treaties, and presidential scandals. During that time, there would even be a couple of voices lifted in dissent from the unison chorus—particularly in England, Salman Rushdie's home, where several commentators were a little mordant about his eagerness to be protected by the minions of the Prime Minister he had formerly taken such obvious pleasure in referring to as Mrs. Torture. In the United States, too, Charles Krauthammer of the Washington *Post* and Guy Trebay of the *Village Voice*, speaking from widely separated points on the political spectrum, had sport not with Salman Rushdie but with his celebrated supporters who, they both said, had been doing a great deal of posturing. (An irreverent poet who agreed with this judgment was even unkind enough to describe his protesting colleagues as "menoposeurs.") There were also a number of reminders, in columns, editorials, and speeches, that Rushdie's book had been deeply—and unacceptably—offensive to Muslims.

* Susan Sontag, Aryeh Neier, Robert Massie, Robert Stone, Larry McMurtry, Diana Trilling, Joan Didion, Edward W. Said, Lionel Tiger, Don DeLillo, Robert Caro, Frances Fitz-Gerald, Leon Wieseltier, Claire Bloom (representing Philip Roth), Anthony Lukas, Gay Talese, Christopher Hitchens, Mary Gordon, Norman Mailer, E.L. Doctorow, John Gregory Dunne.

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For the most part, however, and as was only to be expected, the columnists, the newsweeklies, and the networks all rallied, after their respective kinds and in their respective fashions, in defense of both author and book. A special feature was prepared for the New York *Times Book Review* of March 12 consisting of greetings to Salman Rushdie from "28 distinguished writers born in 21 countries [who] speak to him from their common land—the country of literature." Norman Mailer and others were invited to share their concerns with Ted Koppel on *Nightline*. Even Phil Donahue, icon of daytime television, brought together fifteen literary guests to discuss the Rushdie affair, among them the ubiquitous Norman Mailer, Carl Bernstein, Erica Jong, Victor Navasky, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., Gay Talese, Leon Uris, Kurt Vonnegut, and Howard Fast.

Whatever might otherwise have been Salman Rushdie's literary fate in the United States in the year 1989—and Viking Penguin evidently believed that he was about to move up to the level of established literary certification (another way of saying 72,500 copies)—he had in this entirely surprising way, at terrible, conceivably even permanent, cost achieved apotheosis as both a major literary figure and as a martyr.

II

Oscar Wilde once quipped that it would take a heart of stone not to laugh out loud at the death of Little Nell. What inspiration to wit would he have found, then, in the words issuing from the mouths and pens of many of America's most famous and respected writers during the months of February and March 1989? What, for instance, would he have said had he arrived early enough to be among the 500 lucky seated members of the audience at the PEN/Authors Guild/Article 19 meeting?

He would have heard Gay Talese, master journalistic chronicler of the sex club and the Mafia, explaining how, because he had been a Catholic parochial-school boy, it was only at a college far from home that he had learned about the First Amendment and the separation of church and state, as well as about his right to express the truth as he sees it, "free of ecclesiastical sanctions and fear." Now he wished to lead the group in a prayer for the safety of Salman Rushdie and his family, a prayer that, unlike "the ring of militancy I knew from my days at the altar," reflects the precariousness of human existence: the Lord's Prayer.

Wilde would also have heard a noted anthropologist named Lionel Tiger, who, not to be theologically outdone, cited his own experience as a rebellious Jewish boy of thirteen who barely made it to his own bar-mitzvah party and who had in general been left without faith by the deficiencies of his religious training. Tiger perceived in this history a parallel to what was obviously happening to Salman Rushdie—namely, that never having succeeded in instilling in him a love for Islam, his teachers and elders were now retaliating against him for their own failure. "Enemies of the frightening thoughts of some writers," Tiger implored, "please acknowledge you are not perfect. . . . The Qu'ran is a book. The Bible is a book. Consider it lucky you can confront new social arrangements through the experiment of the book."

A similar plea to the imams was contained in a message sent to the meeting by the famous popular novelist James A. Michener, who began by reminding them that years before, he had written an ecumenical defense of Islam called "Islam, the Misunderstood Religion," which had been widely circulated and had made him a kind of champion of their beliefs. Now he wanted to say to them: "Do not persist in this folly. You make yourselves look ridiculous. You damage your reputation and that of your religion."

Others at the meeting might also have entertained Wilde with the accounts of the great danger they themselves were in. (Dickens, after all, may have been weeping with pen in hand as he did his little heroine in, but he never claimed to have been dying himself.) The novelist Larry McMurtry, for example, not only as an author but as a bookseller—he owns a mini-chain of four second-hand bookshops—deplored the claim of Waldenbooks that it was out of concern for the safety of their employees that they had removed the Rushdie novel from display. In a couple of his own stores there was great risk all the time; he himself had once been threatened with murder by a six-foot-six transvestite in a yellow miniskirt. Such are the risks of urban bookselling, but they have not driven any of McMurtry's employees away, because while they make little money, "their lives are greatly enriched by the opportunity the bookshop offers for daily intimacy with literature. . . . " If *they* were selling *The Satanic Verses*, said their employer, their response to the Ayatollah would be to take as many copies as possible and pile them in the window.

But by far the most straightforward claims to the entitlements of equal victimization with Salman Rushdie were those put forward on the Phil Donahue show. Carl Bernstein of Watergate fame, and most recently the author of a memoir about his Communist parents in the old McCarthyite days, spoke of the time in his childhood when people in Washington, where he grew up, were afraid to have certain books in their houses. The columnist Jimmy Breslin, prepared to "shudder at a madman," nevertheless found a threat far more potent than Khomeini's in "the illiteracy of places like Brooklyn, Chicago, Detroit, wherever poor people live and take drugs and shoot at each other." The novelist Howard Fast, too, wanted to remind his

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fellow Americans that while Khomeini was old and senile and consequently not really dangerous, only thirty years ago there had been another madman named J. Edgar Hoover who sent representatives to publishers and to libraries, telling them not to publish, or to remove from their shelves, "the books of Eric Ambler . . . the books of Howard Fast . . . other books"; and the publishers and librarians had knuckled under.

Next, another novelist, Erica Jong, cautioned that there are two kinds of censorship of authors today: the "good old censorship of the Ayatollah," and the newer, more insidious kind, the censorship "of the accountant, of the number crunchers, of the conglomerates who own all the information media, and who judge every book according to the numbers in which it sells and who condemn authors to death if they don't sell in the same numbers as certain other authors."

Peter Maas, on the other hand—who, like Erica Jong, has nicely managed to obtain a stay of execution at the hands of the number crunchers—knows something about that other, "good old" kind of suppression: "The United States government tried to suppress publication of [Maas's best-selling] *The Valachi Papers*, because of political pressure. They didn't try to kill me, but they did everything else." And from his special vantage point Maas then went on to issue a warning to the Ayatollah, who had this time "bitten off more than he can chew. Because as crazy and fanatical as his fundamentalist followers are, they ain't seen anything compared to the craziness and fanaticism and the fundamentalism of American writers when they're aroused."

Possibly Maas had been stirred to throw down the gauntlet so emphatically by the statements of Norman Mailer and Christopher Hitchens at the PEN/Authors Guild/Article 19 meeting two days earlier. For Mailer and Hitchens did not wish merely to protest Salman Rushdie's martyrdom, but to offer themselves up for a share in it. Hitchens suggested

> a public declaration that until the menace of murder by contract has been lifted from our fellow-writer and from his decent and brave publishers, all of us who believe in the life of the written word announce ourselves publicly as co-conspirators. They can't kill us all, and we may impress on many sincere believers who are worried about the blasphemous association of their faith with crime and repression that, any rumors to the contrary, we too have unalterable beliefs.

Mailer offered Salman Rushdie even more. "It is our duty," he said,

> to form ranks behind him, and our duty to state to the world that if he is ever assassinated, it will be our obligation to stand in his place. If he is ever killed for a folly, we must be killed for the same folly. . . . For if one writer can be killed on a hit contract, and all concerned get away with it, then we may be better off being hit each of us, one by one, in future contracts, until our chiefs in the Western world may be finally aroused by the shocking spectacle of our willingness, even though we are selfish creative artists, to be nonetheless martyred in a cause.

Mailer's call to action did include one condition:

> I will not, however, put my name on such a list alone. Like others, I have my family, my projects, my life to see through to its conclusion. Join me, rather, ten good American authors, male and female, or twenty, or a hundred in such a vow, and we are relatively safe.

Presumably the "chiefs of the Western world," knowing enough about the ways of writers to be aroused by the spectacle of their selfless readiness to be martyred, would not at the same time be put off by a little prudence. But exactly what Mailer wanted to arouse them to do, he did not spell out.

Neither did Robert Caro, the biographer of Lyndon Johnson and Robert Moses. "What," he demanded, "is the government hoping for? That some compromise can be worked out? There are issues on which no compromise is possible, and this is one of them." This sentiment was echoed by both the critic Diana Trilling and the civil-liberties activist Aryeh Neier. No one, however, suggested just what an uncompromising position on the part of the United States government would imply. A declaration of war? A retaliatory death threat against Khomeini? There are Americans suffering in Iranian captivity in Lebanon, an even less safe and less comfortable condition than that of someone living in hiding under the protection of Scotland Yard. Yet if Robert Caro or Diana Trilling or Aryeh Neier has ever publicly called for the kind of draconian measures that might secure the release of these non-literary hostages, there is no record of it.

When the sheer hilarity dies down, one is left with the realization, no less chilling for being quite predictable, that these performances constituted the best a group of writers—people who regularly stake a claim on our serious attention—could do by way of responding to the fact that one of their number had been condemned to death for a book, and by a man whose death sentences the world had good reason to credit.

Granted, the Ayatollah would not have been their enemy of choice. Few among them had ever evinced any notable concern about him and his ways, and many had at first applauded his triumph over the Shah, the man they had been directed to hate. For some, as we have seen, Joseph McCarthy and J. Edgar Hoover were still a greater living menace. Others, like the critic Edward Said of Columbia (and the PLO), were longtime admirers of Islam and were uneasy about the way

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it had been brought into play. Still others, most notably the literary editor of the *New Republic*, Leon Wieseltier ("But we in the West must not gloat. We must remember that Europe, too, was once a stifled, theocratic, feudal, crusading society, that burned books and burned people. It was blasphemy that made us free.") wished to be seen floating in that empyrean far above the particularities of culture where the fortunate "we" transcend all things bad and are dogmatic in their openness to all things good.

Enemy or not, then, for America's literary community the Ayatollah was clearly going to have to stand in line behind Waldenbooks, George Bush, the accountants, the priests, the rabbis, and all the generalized forces of darkness of East and West invoked by Leon Wieseltier.

III

In this desire to float above the particular, Wieseltier may to some extent have been influenced by *The Satanic Verses* itself. For notwithstanding the Ayatollah and numerous critics, both friendly and hostile, Rushdie's novel has very little to do with Islam as such. It is not about either revering or reviling the Prophet, or about freedom or tolerance or any other such inflatable objects. *The Satanic Verses* is about falling from the sky, and not knowing where, or how, one has landed.

That is, to the extent that the real preoccupation of the teller of this tale is permitted a few authentic moments in the telling of it, beneath an almost impenetrable overlay of verbal and intellectual pageantry, tricks, stunts, elusiveness, evasions, and sheer scribble, *The Satanic Verses* is about the love/hate, envy/contempt of a highly educated and privileged colonial for his adoped metropolitan culture. And being unable either to untangle or to encompass this tangled passion, Rushdie tries to carry the whole thing into that region of mystification that the Latin Americans call magic realism—which is, to be sure, neither magic nor realism but rather something that provides a kind of facsimile fantasy of transcendence.

From the first moment, when the novel's two heroes, Muslim Indians on their way from Bombay to London, fall out of a plane that has blown up in the sky and, locked in head-to-foot embrace, fall safely to earth, *The Satanic Verses* remorselessly plows that overcultivated, sterile literary soil perhaps best described as synthetic legend. One of the two miraculous survivors, a film star, becomes, or imagines he becomes, or dreams he becomes—it is key to Rushdie's technique never to decide which—the Archangel Gabriel. The other, a thoroughly Anglicized gentleman with a British education who makes a living by impersonating a variety of characters on the radio, awakes to discover that he has become Satan. What follows is a series of scenes, some meant to be dreams—or are they?—some to be sketches of present-day Muslim London—or are they?—and some to be riotous phantasmagoria. The book resembles nothing so much as one of those finales of old Fellini movies, where the characters end up walking around and around, speaking lines as they pass the camera and unable to get resolved and offstage. In the end, both men return to Bombay, their rebirth from the sky completed. Or is it?

The blasphemy for which Salman Rushdie is being hounded occurs in those sequences—which, it is suggested, might be dreams or psychotic hallucinations—where the film star becomes the Archangel Gabriel. There are all sorts of earthly allusions to the Prophet, the Prophet's history, to his wives, his disciples, his words, and his person that are deeply offensive to Muslims. Moreover, given the almost frenziedly worked-over structure of the book, there is no way these offending passages could have been inadvertent or uncalculated.

Still, how could Rushdie have anticipated the danger he was putting himself in? During one of the early days of the imbroglio, when a suggestion came from Iran that an apology from Rushdie might avert the terrible decree and he did so apologize, some of the more stalwart among his supporters professed their disappointment. There was just a faint hint that he might be truckling to his evil oppressor. But it is perfectly possible to believe that when Salman Rushdie said he had meant no offense, he was telling the whole and simple truth. For while he may have been born a Sunni Muslim, the author of *The Satanic Verses* is by now little more, or if you will, nothing less, than a thoroughly Western man of letters. His religion is art, his liturgy—at least to judge from the thick brilliance of his prose—is English poetry, and his confession is the brotherhood of the pious literary Left. The real, as opposed to the merely pyrotechnical, tension in his novel arises from the fact that its true protagonist, Saladin Chamcha, is a man who has at a huge cost become an English gentleman only to discover that in contrast to the great days of empire, there is no longer any there there. What is now required of a proper Englishman is to hate himself as an exploiter. So it is only in order to end up despising himself as an Englishman that Chamcha has had to learn to despise himself as an Indian.

Among the positively cascading variety of melodies in this book the one note that rings true throughout is a tone of sourness. *The Satanic Verses* jokes, it plays, it burlesques; but it is in fact a sour book. It is almost as if Salman Rushdie had foreseen that should life ever become serious or dangerous, he would discover that he had surrounded himself with a company of clowns.

Yet it is not enough to point out how ignobly and at the same time laughably a number of America's most celebrated "lit-

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erary lions" preened and strutted in their efforts to share in the cachet of someone else's peril. Nor is it enough once again to notice that no matter what the actual source of a wrongdoing, there will always be a group of petted and privileged American citizens who will use the occasion to turn on their own government and their own society, past, present, or future. Both of these phenomena, though they never lose their power to startle, are nevertheless so commonplace as hardly by themselves to be worth mentioning any more.

Were it not, that is, for the most revealing glimpse the Salman Rushdie affair has afforded into something else as well, something very sad: sad for everyone but saddest of all for people whose vocation is to recreate the social world around them by means of words on paper. Salman Rushdie's supporters more than anything else made it clear that they can no longer understand, no longer even imagine, what it means to blaspheme.

They live in and in turn are producers of a culture that has lost the power to say no to them about anything. Nothing is blasphemy, nothing is obscenity, nothing is even bad manners. They would dearly love to think of themselves as brave—it is necessary to their sense of themselves as the true inheritors of the modernist tradition—but there is nothing in their world (except for dissenting from the standard leftist pieties, which hardly a one of them would dream of doing) that requires bravery: not sex, not treason, not even the proper demands of thought and prose.

Think of a culture in which a writer is driven to write a novel about ancient Egypt that early on features a scene in which homosexual fellatio is committed on a mummy—and a vast audience obediently plunks down its money, yawns, and sets the book aside. In such a culture, nothing is more difficult than to live a life, or think a thought, or write a book, of genuine consequence.

This is the culture in which Salman Rushdie, too, lived, until Ayatollah Khomeini decreed otherwise. No wonder the author of that novel about ancient Egypt said at the Rushdie meeting that " . . . the Ayatollah Khomeini has offered us an opportunity to regain our frail religion which happens to be faith in the power of words and our willingness to suffer for them."

Judging from the conduct of its acolytes, a frail religion indeed. Not all the ayatollahs in the world, it seems, would be enough to cleanse its altars and rekindle its lights.

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Writing as a Jew

Hanoch Bartov

LIKE most people, most writers are anything but Jews. And most Jews are not what you would call writers. Yet for those relatively few of us who happen to be both, the question of the writer *as* a Jew, and the Jew as a writer, can lead to fascinating if also, sometimes, frustrating exercises in self-definition.

For one thing, when we say "Jewish writer," do we all have the same thing in mind? Wherein lies the Jew in the Jewish writer? On the final page of Philip Roth's novel, *The Counterlife,* the writer Nathan Zuckerman, an American Jew living among Gentiles in London, defines himself thus:

> A Jew without Jews, without Judaism, without Zionism, without Jewishness, without a temple or an army or even a pistol, a Jew clearly without a home, just the object itself, like a glass or an apple. . . .

We are all familiar with this "Jew without," for he is a stock character in modern (Jewish) literature. But he is also too much of an abstraction to be called, as Roth calls him here, an "object itself." Moreover, he is completely unlike any single Jew we are likely to meet in real life, not to mention many Jews in *The Counterlife.*

At the other pole there is the "Jew with," the Jew whose historical and cultural distinctiveness—no abstracted "glass" or "apple," he—needs no Geiger counter to be detected. But "with" what is this Jew? I would say: with both a past, a particular cultural memory which he is bidden to keep and observe, and a future, a never-tiring dream; also, until quite recently (as historical time is measured), with his own language, his own organized community, his own detailed legal and moral codes. At certain junctures of history, and especially during periods of mortal danger, this "Jew with" has responded to his situation by transforming memory into hope, by forging out of his very orientation toward the past an instrument for creating the future.

To understand this kind of Jew, especially when he happens to be a writer, one must be aware of the role played in his mind by fiction—by the play of the imagination—when reality is unbearable or as yet unformed. "For some time past I have been occupied with a work of infinite grandeur," begins the Zionist diary of Theodor Herzl in the spring of 1895:

> At the moment I do not know whether I shall carry it through. It looks like a mighty dream. But for days and weeks it has possessed me beyond the limits of consciousness. . . .
>
> It is still too early to surmise what will come of it. But my experience tells me that even as a dream it is something remarkable, and that I ought to write it down—if not as a reminder to mankind, then at least for my own delight and reflection in later years. And perhaps as something in between these two possibilities—that is, as literature. If my "novel" [*Roman*] is not translated into reality, at least out of my activity can come a novel.*
>
> Its title: *The Promised Land!*

Herzl, in the event, accomplished both literary "possibilities." First he wrote *The Jewish State,* his programmatic manifesto of Zionist redemption, and seven years later he wrote his utopian novel, *Altneuland.*

I might mention an even earlier example of this same wild "dream" of Herzl's. In July 1881, in Russia, a wave of pogroms sparked by the assassination of Alexander II precipitated the mass emigration of Russian Jews to America. That same month, an appeal to these emigrants to change course for Palestine appeared in a Jerusalem paper, *Ha'Khavatzelet:*

> What is America to you! Among whom are you going to live! They too are like those whom you are leaving now. . . .
>
> And do not fear the Arabs, either, for they are not wild beasts, and we may hope for more from them than from those who are the glory of mankind and call themselves educated and enlightened.

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* It was this passage from Herzl's diary I had in mind in choosing the title for my novel, *In the Middle of the Story.*

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From the perspective of that day, such advice must have seemed a little mad. In July 1881, Palestine had nothing to offer. The Jewish community numbered barely 25,000 souls. My future birthplace, the agricultural settlement of Petakh Tikvah, had been decimated by malaria, and the survivors had long since departed the scene.

Only a few months earlier, as it happens, one of the founders of Petakh Tikvah, a certain Joshua Stampfer, had spoken at a fund-raising meeting in Chicago. According to a lone report in a Hebrew weekly, "The result of the meeting was that a Society was founded . . . and the members pledged a certain annual sum for the support of those who would come to the Holy Land to toil the earth. . . ." But what was Stampfer doing in the United States after Petakh Tikvah had been abandoned? What, by way of either material or spiritual prospects, could he offer his audience? It was not until September of that year that Eliezer Ben-Yehuda would arrive in Palestine and start his one-man crusade for the revival of Hebrew as a language of everyday life. It would be another full year before the first major wave of immigration, the First Aliyah, would get under way, and another twenty-three years before the Second, at the end of which the Jewish population in Palestine would still stand at only 85,000.

But among those in the Second Aliyah were, not so incidentally, a number of second- and third-generation Hebrew writers, articulators of the living link between the Jewish past and the Jewish future. And here, pursuing my theme of the interconnectedness of fantasy in its plenitude and reality in its trickle, I offer a few lines by one of them, Shlomo Zemakh, who in years to come would make his mark as a critic and editor. In 1904, at the age of eighteen, Zemakh, like his boyhood friend David Ben-Gurion, had just left Poland to become a pioneer in Palestine. During the last night of his voyage to Jaffa, which he spent standing on the deck, this lad, who had been brought up in a devout hasidic household, found himself reacting to his historical moment like the quintessential "Jew with" that he was. As he puts it in his autobiography:

> A great sweetness swept over me, as when, for the very first time, I had put on *tefillin*. . . . I narrowed my eyes the way I used to prepare myself in prayer, until my temples ached and I was rocking back and forth in concentration, directing my words at the hidden coastline to the east: "To *Eretz Yisrael* . . . New Society . . . to *Eretz Yisrael* . . . New Society. . . ."

Now, to me, perhaps the most moving thing about this chanted prayer is that it is itself a literary quotation, repeating a line from the monologue of a madman in the novella *Whither?*, the last work of the Hebrew writer Mordecai Zeev Feierberg, who died in 1899 at the age of twenty-five. The real-life scene at the Jaffa coastline, in other words, recapitulated a scene in Hebrew literature that was very much on the minds of thousands of young dreamers then turning their backs on a doomed Jewish existence in Europe and undertaking to secure for their people a Jewish future in the land of Israel. Zemakh was saying his prayers, so to speak, at the very moment a future imagined in books (both sacred and secular) was touching the sands of reality.

Let us leap to 1931. Fifty years had passed since Jerusalem put the question to the Jews of Russia: "What is America to you?" And the Russian Jews had given their answer: millions went to America, thousands to Palestine. By 1931 the American Jewish community had reached the five-million mark; in Palestine, notwithstanding the Balfour Declaration and the transfer of control from Turkey to the British Mandate, despite unceasing educational efforts in the Diaspora, and despite four distinct waves of immigration, the Jewish population had reached a mere 175,000.

And yet, by 1931 the nucleus of a distinct Jewish society had crystallized. There was a rich network of political, economic, and social organizations. Perhaps of greatest significance of all was that Hebrew had become the language of education, from kindergarten to university; of publishing enterprises; of acquisitions in public libraries, enriched annually with numerous translations from world literature; of public life and administration; of the daily press, the theater, and to a growing extent the street and the home.

I was five years old in 1931, a first-year pupil in the Talmud Torah of Petakh Tikvah, where my father was then teaching. Hebrew was the only language I spoke, a language in which I had already begun to read. Although my parents were newcomers, barely six years in the country, my father had arrived with a mastery of Hebrew, which he had taught while still in Poland. To me and to all the other children around, Hebrew was so natural, our Jewish environment was so natural, that I cannot now recall our ever having given it a conscious thought. My home was moderately religious, and up to the sixth grade I attended religious schools. But with my father's encouragement I was also reading abridged Hebrew versions of *Uncle Tom's Cabin, Oliver Twist, Tom Sawyer,* the Brothers Grimm, Hans Christian Andersen. As I grew older I read everything from James Fenimore Cooper to John Steinbeck, from Gogol to Gorky, from Stendhal to Romain Rolland, from Goethe to Thomas Mann (I received a copy of *Tonio Kröger* for my bar mitzvah)—all in the only language I knew, Hebrew.

And non-Jews, where were they in all this? Nowhere; the tension between Jews and everything non-Jewish which to this day plays such a central role in Jewish writing was outside my experience as a child. I knew about it, of course, but to me and my friends it was like something

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out of the Gothic tales that we loved to read, frightening but at the same time reassuringly remote.

The same goes for our concept of the Diaspora. On the one hand there were those "other Jews," whom we had been taught to think of as polar opposites to our own selves, as everything we were not and as having failed to be everything we had become. On the other hand, these same people were often our own European families—in my case, grandfather, grandmother, aunts, uncles, and first cousins, figures chiseled into my imagination by means of my father's ambivalent reminiscences and my mother's tears. Where the real, flesh-and-blood Diaspora Jews were in all this I did not yet know, and would not effectively learn until I saw for myself in 1945.

What I saw in the summer of that year, as a nineteen-year-old soldier in the Jewish Brigade serving in Europe, were the Jews who had survived, and ever since that encounter I have known who I myself am, both as a man and as a writer. I am a Jew, period.

It would be simpler and perhaps easier to say otherwise—"I am me, period," or "I am an Israeli, writing in my native tongue, Hebrew, period." But I am not, and have not been since at least that summer of 1945, when I arrived at the deep conviction that either Israeli means Jewish or it is utterly meaningless, or worse. To me, to say "Israeli, period," is to join the long, crooked line of those determined to escape their Jewishness, to cease to be.

Zionism itself, of course, represents a dramatic manifestation both of the Jewish people's will to be and—let us not delude ourselves—of that impulse to negate ourselves, to become somebody else, to be "normalized." Yet today, half a century after the birth of what some regarded as a new generation of un-Jewish, de-Judaized "New Hebrews" in the land of Israel, I can nevertheless assert in plain English (translated from plain Hebrew) that, for me, being a Zionist and an Israeli, deep-rooted as those twin identities are, has no meaning *except* as a part of being a Jew, an actual Jew in actual history.

Besides, there was the actuality at home to correct any misconceptions one might have had on that score. In 1931, as I have mentioned, there were but 175,000 Jews in Palestine, most of them newcomers; between 1931 and 1947 the community exploded to 630,000, a real mismash of lands and tongues and not at all any imagined new Hebrew identity, separate from the history, culture, and behavior of Jewish communities in the Diaspora as they had developed over the centuries. The day Israel became independent, only one out of every twelve Jewish citizens was either native-born or had been living there for at least thirty years. All the rest were relative newcomers, most of them in the country fifteen years or fewer.

And this was true not only of the population at large but of the "Hebrew" elites as well, including the legendary "Palmakh Generation," so-called after the crack shock-troop units of the Israeli army. Take the famous case of the 35 commandos who in the 1948-49 War of Independence fell in battle on their way to liberate the besieged settlements in the Judean hills. "The 35," immortalized in a poem by Hayim Gouri, are a central metaphor for an entire generation—but who, in reality, were they? The platoon had been improvised at the last minute, and the men, most of them students at the Hebrew University, came from a number of Haganah units in Jerusalem. Fifteen of them, including their legendary commander, Danny Mass, were foreign-born. Danny Mass, twenty-four, was hardly fourteen years in the country.

That, and not the "New Hebrews," was the reality: a past remembered or invented, a future imagined, hardly any present at all to rest one's feet on. The term "the New Hebrews" was itself an invention, coined by the poet Yonathan Ratosh, born Uriel Halperin. His brochure, "Proclamation to Hebrew Youth," appeared during 1943—that horrible year in Jewish history—and it was we, little native-born Jewish brutes in Palestine, whom Ratosh declared the New Hebrews, a nation apart from Diaspora Jews.

I MENTION Ratosh in connection with what I am trying to say about being a Jew—a word which to him was anathema—partly because for quite a number of years I had the privilege of working alongside this wonderful poet at the same newspaper, he as night proofreader, I as night editor. I was all that he objected to, a self-proclaimed Jew who loved Yiddish and was a member of the Zionist Left. But I also possessed one attribute for the sake of which he could forgive me everything: I was native-born, and hence, potentially, his man.

But I never was. In an old issue of the literary biweekly *Massa* I was pleased to uncover recently the text of some remarks I made in 1954 when my novel *Each Had Six Wings,* whose subject is the "Second Israel" (immigrants from the Arab and Mediterranean East, as well as the hundreds of thousands from DP camps in Europe), won a literary prize:

> The story is not just that of alien newcomers, it is my own story as well, things remembered from my own childhood, from when my own parents' home was also a home of newcomers, the story of my own generation, only seemingly worlds apart from the so-called "Second Israel.". . .

And again:

> I also make use of folk songs, proverbs, tales, and jokes, treasures I came across during my studies. That encounter turned into a source of pride and love.

In quoting this young member of the Palmakh Generation, which is what I then was, I merely

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mean to underline the gap between that young man's real world—a thoroughly Jewish world—and the mythical role attributed to him. It was Albert Einstein, I think, who said that the one reason he regretted being born a Jew was that he was thereby denied the opportunity of choosing to be one. I would hate to think that in being born an Israeli I would be denied all those Jewish things that Roth's Zuckerman thinks he can be Jewish without.

And here, for the delicious irony of it, is one of them—a deathbed letter, dated January 10, 1941 and addressed by Yonathan Ratosh's father, Yehiel Halperin, to his newborn grandson, Khaman. The grandfather had been one of the founders of the Hebrew School in Odessa and Warsaw; the child, named typically by Ratosh after the pagan sun god (a second son, Saharon, was named after the moon), would be killed forty-four years later in the Sinai by a crazed Egyptian soldier. The letter itself reads like a last cry not so much to the baby as to the dying old man's son, a cry to that son to free himself from myth and to accept his people's real history and culture. It opens:

> To my first grandson, tenth generation to the Genius of Minsk, author of *Sequence of the Generations,* may the memory of the righteous be blessed. May the blessing of your forefathers, rabbis of genius, ecstatic hasidim and scholars at *yeshivot,* authors of profound and penetrating books, rest on your head, my new child. And may you grow to become great in the Torah, in learning, and in science; may you become our pride and glory, an important link in an age-old line of rabbis and scholars. . . .

As between the son, Ratosh, and the father, Halperin, I take my place with the father, and against that strain, even today far from dead in Israel, that says "I am an Israeli, period."

But it is not just against the "Right," as it were, that I define myself. In a piece published in last year's Rosh Ha-Shanah edition of the Jerusalem Weekly *Ha'Ir,* the Israeli Arab novelist Anton Shammas wrote:

> Why does the Left in Israel insist on being Zionist, and refuse to realize that this cannot be—you are either Zionist or Left?

For Shammas, Zionism equals racism, and Israel's Law of Return, the heart of Zionism, is a racist law. So if I, for instance, want to remain a leftist I must renounce my Zionist convictions and opt for a truly "secular, democratic" state of Israel.

What a strange coincidence: the ultra-expansionist Ratosh, for whom the land of the Hebrews embraced not just Greater Israel but the entire Fertile Crescent, and the Palestinian Arab Anton Shammas, whose childhood memory of a huge Star of David makes him "sometimes wonder if that star was not branded into our flesh," agree on the need to de-Zionize, which is to say de-Judaize, Israel. Well, I for one decline to consider that I had (in the Yiddish phrase) a stone for a mother.

To me, being Jewish is anything but a disembodied abstraction, let alone an accidental condition, like being "a glass or an apple." It is, at this moment, at the end of this century of Jewish solitude, to be overcome by the sense of continuing mystery. I am one of the fortunate: having been born into the Israeli condition, I have also been able to choose freely my identity as a Jew. And I have lived through one of the most momentous changes in Jewish history, the passage, as it were, from book to state, from words to action. I have been part of what was a tiny immigrant community, itself subsisting mostly on myth, or through the power of an idea, and I have lived to see it become the most vital element in the body and soul of the Jewish people, still, perhaps, insufficiently oriented to the future but absolutely bursting with the present, a land where nine out of ten under the age of thirty are native-born, and of these, almost half have native-born parents. To me, a Jewish writer, such figures contain an almost magical potency.

THREE years ago I was in Portland, Oregon, on a two-day visit. Among those whom my hosts had arranged for me to meet was a certain Rabbi Joshua Stampfer. As soon as I beheld his face I noticed the resemblance to the Stampfers of Petakh Tikvah, and half-jokingly, even before saying hello, I asked:

"Are you the grandson?"

"No," he shot back, "the great-grandson."

It turns out that the original Joshua Stampfer, while on his 1881 fund-raising tour for Petakh Tikvah, for some reason took out American citizenship papers. A year later he was back in Palestine, where his descendants, who all lived in Petakh Tikvah and were a fixture of my childhood, became leading citizens. But they kept their American passports. Then, around 1924, one of the grandsons, fearful of losing his U.S. citizenship under the laws newly enacted by Congress, went to serve as a rabbi in Akron, Ohio. Sixty-one years later I was to meet his son Joshua in his temple in Portland, Oregon.

But that too is not the end of the tale. For the present Joshua's son, Saul, has become an Israeli, and teaches Jewish history at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. In short, and to improve upon Herzl, the "novel" has been translated into reality, *and* out of the reality there may yet emerge a novel.

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A Limit to Affirmative Action?

James Blanton

VIRTUALLY all of the people I have known in the musical world, including those I met during the years I spent as a professional musician, have been political liberals. As such, they are suckers for every "humane" and "compassionate" cause that comes down the pike, always available to perform at a nuclear-freeze benefit or a pro-choice rally, always ready to sign petitions and advertisements in opposition to one or another putative manifestation of war, racism, or poverty. Granted, not all have been as vulgar about their political leanings as, say, Leonard Bernstein. But if Bernstein's frenzied scrambling from one left-wing cause to another is a caricature, like all caricatures it bears an easily recognizable relationship to reality.

This may help to explain why I was so startled by the reaction of the American musical community to the news that came out of Detroit earlier this year—the news that, in the name of affirmative action, the Detroit Symphony, one of America's leading orchestras, had hired a black bass player, Richard Robinson, without the formality of an audition. What startled me was that the reaction was largely negative.

In the "real" world, such news would hardly have been news at all. The procedures of affirmative action—which is to say, race-conscious hiring goals and quotas—are by now taken for granted, especially in high-profile institutions. To complain publicly about them, as I have learned since I left the music business, can be hazardous to your professional health. Yet the cries of protest from musicians over the Detroit Symphony's decision were immediate and unhesitating. Most surprisingly of all, black musicians were the first to complain, and at least one even went so far as to decline a lucrative appointment in Detroit after word of Robinson's hiring got around.

What caused so many American musicians to part company on this issue with liberal orthodoxy? When I told an older and more cynical acquaintance of my surprise, he responded with a shrug and a properly world-weary question: whose ox was being gored? He had a point. While musicians are liberals, they are also professionals, and the instinct to protect the *sancta* of one's profession from external threat is a universal one. But things are not so simple as that. Indeed, the story of the hiring of Richard Robinson, though set in the somewhat provincial world of American music, is in many ways emblematic of what might be called the decadent period of the civil-rights movement; it tells us a great deal about what we as a nation have done in the name of affirmative action, and what it has cost.

IT STARTED, like so many tales of political intrigue, with a letter.* This particular letter was written by Constance Price, a black violinist who had auditioned for the Detroit Symphony Orchestra in 1975 after obtaining a master's degree in music from the University of Michigan. Her teacher, Jack Boesen of the Detroit Symphony, had assured her that she would get a job, and his track record gave her no reason to doubt him. Two of Boesen's older black students, Joseph Striplin and Darwyn Apple, had landed positions with major orchestras, Striplin with the Detroit and Apple with the St. Louis Symphony.

Still, it was her first professional audition, and about 30 other players were competing for the same spot. The odds were stacked heavily against Constance Price, just as they are stacked against any other instrumentalist, black or white, who wants to play with a major American symphony orchestra. Not surprisingly, she failed to get the job. Bruce Smith, a member of the Toledo Symphony and one of her fellow students at the University of Michigan, was hired instead.

Smith had auditioned four times for the Detroit Symphony before being hired. This, too, is not unusual: most people who finally land a position with a major orchestra go through several auditions before succeeding. But after her failure Price chose not to give it another shot. Instead, she took a teaching job at a local high school. She also found a new violin teacher: Mischa Mischakoff, former concertmaster of the Detroit Symphony

JAMES BLANTON is the pen name of a writer who worked for several years as a professional musician.

* This account is based on a four-part series of articles published in the Detroit *News* last October by Nancy Malitz, the paper's music critic.

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and, earlier, of the NBC Symphony Orchestra under Arturo Toscanini. And she went back to the University of Michigan to obtain a doctorate in music and educational psychology.

Nine years later, in 1984, Constance Price finally decided to try again. Her second audition took place at the express invitation of the Detroit Symphony. Like most government-subsidized organizations, the orchestra had been under pressure to improve its record on minority hiring. Now, in 1984, it employed only one full-time black musician, Joseph Striplin, although several other blacks, including Price herself, occasionally played with the orchestra as substitutes.

Price was asked to audition as part of a program to recruit black musicians. But the competition was to be considerably stiffer this time around than it had been in 1975, with 83 candidates instead of 30. Once again Constance Price failed to make it past the preliminaries. This time, though, she sat down and wrote a letter. She sent it to Oleg Lobanov, the then-president of the Detroit Symphony. "I am writing," she began,

> in the interest of Detroit's black community with regard to the lack of black musicians in the DSO. Having participated in the violin auditions [and been] the recipient of a very high rating, I observed that the selection procedure did not encourage the identification and selection of qualified black applicants. It would seem that qualified black applicants who are citizens of Detroit would be valued and sought out by an orchestra serving the city whose black population is estimated at 60 percent.

Price sent copies of her letter to two of Detroit's black state legislators, Representative Morris W. Hood, Jr. and Senator David S. Holmes, Jr. Her intentions in doing so were probably not innocent; given the circumstances, circulating copies of such a letter was tantamount to lobbing a hand grenade through the front door of the Detroit Symphony's offices. Hood and Holmes, both Democratic members of Michigan's joint House-Senate General Government Appropriations subcommittee, promptly rose to the bait and demanded that the orchestra offer proof that its affirmative-action program was more than just a formal homage to the requirements of the law.

At this point, Oleg Lobanov made a tactical error. Asked by a legislator why the Detroit Symphony had not hired more black musicians, he reportedly replied that blacks "prefer to play jazz." This remark, according to Representative Shirley Johnson, another state legislator and member of the appropriations subcommittee, "caused the fuse to blow with regard to Morris Hood." Hood and Holmes spent the next four years gradually turning up the heat. "Every year on this subcommittee," Representative Johnson told the Detroit *News*, "it's the same. We get into a real heated discussion regarding the DSO and its affirmative-action programs. If it isn't Representative Hood who brings it up, it's Senator Holmes."

The orchestra, seeing the writing on the wall, finally agreed to hire another black musician by 1990 as part of a new affirmative-action plan. That was not good enough for Morris Hood. "What I want to see immediately, if not sooner," he said last July, "is another black face within the Detroit Symphony in addition to the one we already have. Two blacks in the Detroit Symphony by February 1989." Hood and Holmes also demanded that the legislature withhold half of the orchestra's appropriation until it had proved it was "maximizing its affirmative-action efforts." This threat was not to be taken lightly. Like most American orchestras, the Detroit Symphony is perpetually in the red; each year it receives $2.55 million—8.7 percent of its budget—in appropriations from the state of Michigan.

For an orchestra to go about "maximizing its affirmative-action efforts" poses a number of dilemmas peculiar to the music business.

Blacks currently make up only 1 percent of the 4,000 musicians employed by America's leading orchestras. As of 1988, only one of the country's top orchestras, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, had as many as four blacks on its roster. The Philadelphia Orchestra had three, six orchestras had two, and four orchestras, including the New York Philharmonic, the Boston Symphony, and the Detroit Symphony, had one each. The Chicago Symphony and the Minnesota Orchestra had none.

Why? "Are you telling me we can't find qualified black musicians . . . in this nation of 200 million people?" asks Morris Hood. In fact, many qualified people believe exactly that. "This is like hockey," says Joseph Striplin. "If the New York Rangers had to have ten or twelve black players, they might have a lot of trouble finding them."

The numbers leave little room for doubt. The New York Philharmonic's Musical Assistance Fund, which provides scholarships and other forms of support for minority classical musicians, recently surveyed the country's top 25 music conservatories. Out of 5,000 orchestra-bound instrumentalists, it found fewer than 100 blacks. "If you apply the standard bell curve to their probable talent," says Daniel Windham, who runs the fund, "that means 20 of them are qualified to play in a major American orchestra."

The fact that black singers are amply represented in the field of opera has led some observers to conclude that the conservatories are discriminating against incoming black instrumentalists. But though such was no doubt once the case, it is no longer so. Today's conservatories are frankly eager to enroll black musicians, singers and instrumentalists alike. The training a classical singer undergoes, however, takes less time and is

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far less rigorous than of an instrumentalist; some singers begin studying in earnest for major operatic careers as late as their early thirties. By contrast, a classical instrumentalist who wishes to have a serious professional career as an adult must almost always begin his training in childhood—or not at all.

Yet most American blacks, for a variety of reasons, shun classical music. They do not go to hear it (as any big-city concertgoer can tell you from experience) and they do not encourage their children to play it. To the extent that black children are urged to pursue any kind of musical career, it is usually in jazz or popular music (as Oleg Lobanov got into trouble for saying). By the time the typical young black intrumentalist discovers classical music, it is too late for him seriously to consider it as a possible career. Like it or not, this is why blacks are "underrepresented" in American conservatories and symphony orchestras, and why only one black American classical instrumentalist, the pianist André Watts, has had a major solo career. (Trumpeter Wynton Marsalis, though he also plays classical music, is primarily known as a jazz musician.) It is a problem—if it *is* a problem, and not simply a fact of life—that will not be solved by a thousand affirmative-action hiring programs.

But let us assume that qualified, or qualifiable, black candidates can be found. What then? In practice, affirmative action has come to consist of the use of color-conscious goals and quotas to increase minority representation in a given industry or academic enterprise. But a symphony orchestra that tries to apply such goals and quotas in its hiring of musicians immediately runs afoul of established audition practices instituted in the last decades—at the urging, as it happens, of black musicians themselves.

In 1969, two blacks who had previously auditioned unsuccessfully for the New York Philharmonic filed a complaint with the New York State Commission on Human Rights, charging the orchestra with discriminatory practices. The two, cellist Earl Madison and bassist Arthur Davis, asked the commission to require that they be allowed to take part in a "blind" audition, in which candidates perform behind screens in order to prevent judges from making decisions based on personal knowledge of the auditioner.

Such auditions were not standard practice in 1969, and the New York Philharmonic, arguing that "blind" auditions prevented judges from observing a musician's "physical technique" (in conductor Leonard Bernstein's words), managed to persuade the commission to turn aside Madison and Davis's request. Yet while the Philharmonic won its case, it lost the battle of the headlines. Said Whitney Young, president of the National Urban League: "It is shameful for a major cultural institution, one that gives concerts in a beautiful new hall financed by public subscription, to cling to a color bar while other fields are in the process of discarding it." In due course orchestras throughout the United States, the New York Philharmonic and the Detroit Symphony included, would adopt a blind-audition policy (it was under such a policy that Constance Price failed in 1984 to win a position), and the American Federation of Musicians would make blind auditions an industry-wide condition of union-sanctioned contracts.*

The new policy was acclaimed by the black musical community as a major step toward ridding American orchestras of discriminatory practices. Another major step was undertaken in the 70's, when American orchestras began to develop full-scale minority-outreach programs. By today, according to the Detroit *News,* the Detroit Symphony's program actually "establishes specific racial quotas and timetables for every aspect of the DSO operation—from administrative appointments to the makeup of the chorus and the board of directors." Although several key features of this program have been jettisoned in recent months as a result of budget cuts, the Symphony has managed by means of it to develop a talent pool of local black substitute musicians who are given frequent opportunities to perform. Furthermore, it does not hold auditions for an open chair until at least one black musician has agreed to try out.

But the two initiatives designed to help black musicians are in conflict, both practical and philosophical. Thus, in 1988, thanks to the affirmative-action program, the Detroit Symphony succeeded in attracting nine black candidates out of a total field of 244. But blind auditions made it impossible to single out such candidates for special treatment once beyond the initial screening. In the event, no black players, not even the orchestra's own black substitutes, got past the preliminary auditions last year.†

According to the iron logic of affirmative action, any certified minority group that is "underrepresented" in a given industry is *ipso facto* the victim of conscious and deliberate discrimination. This was Morris Hood's explanation in 1988 for the Detroit Symphony's failure to have hired a second black player: "If, after thirteen years of pursuing it and talking about commitment, you tell me that you cannot find another black musician, I say that is totally untrue." And since black musicians had failed to

* In fact, the Detroit Symphony's procedure is far more "blind" even than the prevailing norm. While most American orchestras remove the screens after the preliminary auditions, the Detroit Symphony's final auditions are also blind—a policy reportedly adopted to reduce still further the likelihood of accusations of racial discrimination.

† On the other hand, blind auditions have had an immediately beneficial effect on women: between 1973 and 1988, the number of women in the Detroit Symphony jumped from six to eighteen, and other orchestras reported comparable increases.

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make the cut at blind auditions, it followed that such auditions were themselves responsible for the underrepresentation of blacks in American symphony orchestras. Pursuing this logic to its conclusion, a three-member team appointed by Michigan's Governor James J. Blanchard now recommended that the Detroit Symphony develop "new audition procedures that will . . . assure . . . the hiring of [minority] musicians."

At first, the orchestra remained adamant. Its music director, Gunther Herbig, told the Detroit *News* that "I am absolutely committed to the blind-audition process. It is the most just process which I [have] found anywhere in the world." Joseph Striplin said flatly that "[t]he audition issue is an area in which people in the black community are wrong. . . . I know that there isn't discrimination in the auditions." But the Detroit Symphony soon learned that it was behind the times. The old ideal of color-blind equality of opportunity had long since been abandoned in favor of the newer vision of race-conscious equality of outcome. Striplin, backed by several other players, eventually came around to endorsing a "one-time-only" affirmative-action hiring program in an attempt to "prime the pump, to create role models, people whose example and influence will be felt within the black community."

February of this year arrived, and no black musician had been hired. Hood and Holmes renewed their threat. This time, they persuaded the rest of the appropriations subcommittee to go along with them. The move was well-timed—the orchestra was on tour in Europe and in no position to deal with bad publicity, much less with an attempt to cut its funding in half. One week later, the members of the Detroit Symphony voted to waive the audition requirement in their contracts to permit the agreed-upon "one-time-only" affirmative-action hire. The bass section of the orchestra unanimously recommended Richard Robinson of Detroit, who had spent the previous year playing with the orchestra as a substitute. The orchestra's state appropriation was released the next day.

Initial reaction to Robinson's employment was positive. Thus, in a typical comment, Catherine French, chief executive officer of the American Symphony Orchestra League, said that "the DSO is to be applauded." In fact, the only person who seemed to have doubts was Robinson himself. From the very beginning, he appeared uncomfortable about the circumstances under which he had secured a chair in one of America's top orchestras. "I took the job," he told the Detroit *News* on the day of the announcement, "mainly to help the orchestra and the people I have come to know as friends over the last year that I have been working in Detroit as a substitute musician." A few days later he told the New York *Times*, "I would have rather auditioned like everybody else. Somehow this devalues the audition and worth of every other player."

It soon turned out, however, that Robinson was not the only black musician with misgivings. In a front-page story on the affair (March 5, 1989), the New York *Times* quoted Darwyn Apple, Jack Boesen's former student and Constance Price's old friend: "The intrusion of politics into an area where legislators are ignorant could wreak havoc with artistic integrity. This is going to discourage blacks from going to Detroit, or even applying." Michael Morgan, the black assistant conductor of the Chicago Symphony, put it even more bluntly: "Now even when a black player is hired on the merits of his playing, he will always have the stigma that it was to appease some state legislator." The *Times* also revealed that James DePriest, a highly respected black conductor who had been approached by the Detroit Symphony to replace Gunther Herbig as music director, declined the offer on account of the controversy stirred up by Hood and Holmes. "It's impossible for me to go to Detroit because of the atmosphere," said DePriest. "People mean well, but you fight for years to make race irrelevant, and now they are making race an issue."

Perhaps more suggestive than the reactions of these black musicians was the fact that so few newspaper editorials endorsed the hiring of Richard Robinson. It is hard to believe that five or ten years ago, America's opinion-makers would have failed to back the Detroit Symphony in its decision. Today they seem less certain.

Indeed, a growing number of people around the country—and not just in the music business—have begun to speak openly about some of the evolving negative effects of the policies of racial preference that have been undertaken in the name of affirmative action. Although such criticism has long been a staple of conservative or neoconservative thought, it has now also penetrated the liberal community. Within weeks of the hiring of Richard Robinson by the Detroit Symphony, for example, the New York *Times Magazine* published an article by Joseph Califano in which the Democratic activist and former Secretary of Health and Human Services recommended that his party rethink its commitment to "goals and timetables." In *Harper's*, the black academic Shelby Steele blamed affirmative-action policies for the increase of racial tension on college campuses and called for "skewing the formula for entitlement away from race and gender and back to constitutional rights." And the Supreme Court, America's most sensitive barometer of shifting public opinion, recently overturned a Richmond, Virginia minority set-aside program as unconstitutional.

Nevertheless, although second thoughts about affirmative action are now increasingly aired in public, the policy itself is not only alive but flourishing, and (as a recent poll of *Fortune* 500

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companies reveals) has become entrenched throughout the major institutions of American society. The Detroit Symphony case is thus merely a late example of affirmative action at work in an "industry" that had previously resisted it.

Moreover, while the Detroit Symphony insists that Richard Robinson's hiring was a "one-time-only" exception, there is reason to doubt that its troubles will end here. Within days of the hiring, David Holmes announced that two blacks in the Detroit Symphony were not enough, and issued a new list of what he would regard as acceptable changes in the orchestra's hiring procedures. Among these new requirements was the presence of one or two black candidates at each audition—with the total number of candidates considered at each audition to be limited to ten—and, for each black candidate, an opportunity to rehearse with the Detroit Symphony prior to auditioning.

Holmes's laundry list was denounced by other Michigan lawmakers—and ignored by Morris Hood. But black politicians in other cities have surely noted the example of Detroit, and in those cities which have "minority" majorities the pressure to step up black hiring by symphony orchestras is likely to increase as a result. The arguments will be more sophisticated in New York and Chicago, but the effect will almost certainly be the same: a gradual relaxation of the blind-audition procedure for minority candidates.

The consequences of such a relaxation are easy to predict, since similar developments have already taken place in many large corporations and graduate schools. Once blind auditions are shunted aside in favor of color-conscious selection procedures, symphony orchestras will begin competing directly against each other for a severely limited pool of talent. Such competitions will inevitably be "won" by the orchestras with the most money and prestige: New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, Cleveland, Boston, and Los Angeles. Second-rank ensembles like the Detroit Symphony will be left holding a bag long since emptied of first-rate black musicians.

Not that this will trouble the likes of David Holmes, who told the New York *Times* that the shortage of black classical musicians could be solved by training non-classical musicians to play in symphony orchestras. "Music is music," he said. "Do-re-me-fa-so-la-ti-do. I learned that in school." Although few would embrace so explicitly philistine a position, kinder, gentler versions of the "music is music" argument are already in circulation. Here is Phyllis Fleming, formerly the Detroit Symphony's education and outreach director, who now runs an all-black orchestra in Washington, D.C.:

> [A]ny major orchestra wants, first and foremost, to preserve a certain artistic tradition. That is the highest priority. And while they talk about creating programs for education and outreach, they really want to do everything they can to maintain that tradition, so it doesn't allow much room for change with regard to programming, guest artists, affirmative action, or anything else. . . . I'd rather work for an organization that is devoted to recognizing the talents of various ethnic groups at various levels. That's more important for me now than playing more Brahms and Beethoven.

Fifty years ago this April, the Daughters of the American Revolution prevented Marian Anderson, the great black contralto, from giving a recital at the racially segregated Constitution Hall in Washington, D.C. At the urging of the First Lady, Eleanor Roosevelt, Interior Secretary Harold Ickes invited Anderson to sing on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial. That performance is still remembered today as one of the great symbolic events in the history of the American civil-rights movement—though Miss Anderson, at the age of eighty-seven, continues to be somewhat reserved, even diffident, about acknowledging its larger implications. ("I wasn't trying to sway anybody into any movements or anything of that sort, you know," she told the Chicago *Tribune* recently.)

Times change, and so do the symbols that suit them. But in the case of Richard Robinson, at least the diffidence remains. Reluctant to serve as the symbol of a cause, he insists that he took his job with the Detroit Symphony not to break down the doors of prejudice but "mainly to help the orchestra." Still, Robinson symbolizes the fate of one important aspect of the civil-rights movement in 1989 just as surely as Marian Anderson symbolized it in 1939.

Everyone in a position to know agrees that Richard Robinson is a fine bass player. In the short run, it seems likely that he will retain the respect of his fellow musicians. They are, after all, good liberals. But they are also artists, and should the Detroit Symphony now begin systematically to lower its musical standards by abandoning blind auditions, it is safe to assume that in spite of Robinson's own misgivings about being hired without an audition, he will become the unwilling portent of the decline and fall of what once was a very good orchestra. That is a hard load to carry. But it is a load already carried by tens of thousands of talented middle-class blacks who have been hired in the era of mandated equality of outcome and who spend each day having to prove their worth again and again in the eyes of skeptical colleagues.

Such are some of the fruits of the decadent period of the civil-rights movement.

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Tolstoy and the Pursuit of Happiness

Algis Valiunas

"WHENEVER—at whatever moment—she was asked what she was thinking about she could have answered without fail, 'Always about my happiness and my unhappiness.'" No novelist but Tolstoy could have charged this apparently unremarkable sentence, which summarizes the preoccupations of an unfaithful wife, with so potent a current of meaning, and in *Anna Karenina,* a novel powered in large part by philosophical and religious speculation, no other sentence carries significance of a higher voltage. For Tolstoy, happiness and unhappiness were the human matters of the utmost consequence, and they were the principal themes of his writings.

One must make the appropriate distinctions: the life of a well-to-do woman preoccupied with her adultery is not, after all, that of a great novelist who imagines such a woman and her experience. Yet what Tolstoy wrote of Anna Karenina he might have said, at almost any time, and just as truly, of himself. The pursuit of happiness was his true life's work; it engaged all his powers. Somehow he knew that he had been made for happiness, and that happiness was the end man was made for. "The craving of a man's body and soul for happiness," he wrote in his diary at the age of twenty-four, "is the only path to an understanding of the mysteries of life." To desire happiness, he understood, was to seek the meaning of one's life, and to attain it was to see as deeply into the divine intention as a man could hope to do. He poured his colossal energies into discovering what this happiness might be, and how he could take possession of his rightful share.

The recent publication of two new biographies* provides an occasion to examine the marks left on Tolstoy's spiritual person by this effort. Unfortunately, neither the English novelist A.N. Wilson nor the French biographer Martine de Courcel—though both of them are gifted and serious writers—does much to illuminate the happiness Tolstoy fought for or to demonstrate just what part of it he managed to get. The trouble is that the question of Tolstoy's happiness is essentially a religious one, and de Courcel takes Tolstoy seriously but not religion, while Wilson takes religion seriously but not Tolstoy.

"Tolstoy was never so happy as when he was writing *War and Peace,*" Wilson rightly observes, yet he determines this happiness to be a neurotic's absorption in an art that offers "the comforting possibilities of distortion, of laundering experience. . . ." De Courcel, for her part, finds that Tolstoy was happiest when overcome by "an irresistible urge to write, having nothing to do with any humanitarian, social, or religious consideration." Yet for Tolstoy, who wrote novels, novellas, short stories, plays, religious treatises, political tracts, articles on pedagogical theory, in addition to keeping a diary (intermittently) from the age of eighteen until his death at eighty-two, there was no desire to create that did not have its religious impulse. Neither biographer ever really considers it possible that, somewhere in the tumultuous religious quest that was Tolstoy's life, he might have found, if only for a spell, something like the true way to live, of which his greatest writing was the natural expression.

ONE would be surprised if a man like Tolstoy had not believed himself made to be happy. His fellow novelist and contemporary Turgenev once said of him, "Now there's a man of many blessings. Fortune has smiled on him his whole life long." He certainly had an auspicious start, being born (in 1828) to a noble and wealthy family—he was Count Leo Nikolayevich Tolstoy—on the estate that he was to inherit, Yasnaya Polyana. And quite apart from the social advantages, he enjoyed any number of others, beginning with literary genius but not stopping there. Plainly the work of one of nature's most glorious days, Tolstoy was a marvel of ability, energy, sensitivity, strength. He sprouted passions and talents prodigiously, from every inch of him, with an extravagance that bordered on the joyous preposterousness of heroic folklore; it was as though Homer had been endowed with the eye, not only of Monet, but also of Ted Williams.

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* *Tolstoy,* by A.N. Wilson, Norton, 572 pp., $25.00. *Tolstoy: The Ultimate Reconciliation,* by Martine de Courcel, translated by Peter Levi, Scribners, 458 pp., $27.50.

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In his youth, Tolstoy aspired to be the wisest man in the world, and the bravest, and the strongest, and certainly the most admired: sizable ambitions, by anybody's reckoning. He did not do so badly by them. He even grew up to be something of a he-man; more perhaps than any other man of comparable intellectual and artistic gifts, he knew the full reach of the body's power and pleasure. A gymnast, a weight-lifter, a wrestler, he was renowned for his feats of strength. He prided himself on handling a plough as easily as did the sturdiest of his serfs. He served in the army for several years, and not without gallantry, being awarded a high honor for valor as an officer in the Crimean War.

Surely no one seemed to love life's variety, to crave the joys of sensation, emotion, and thought, more voraciously than he. He was a graceful horseman, and a crack shot; the birds, Turgenev complained, flew his way. His passion for the hunt extended also to women, who tended to fly his way as well. A fine pianist, he thought for a time of becoming a composer, and once spent an afternoon playing a piece by Haydn over and over for some nightingales outside his window. He tried his hand at sculpture. He managed an estate of 4,000 acres. He founded a school for the peasant children of Yasnaya Polyana, which was perhaps the most successful school ever run on anarchist principles, mostly because it had him for a teacher. He fathered fourteen known children, nine of whom lived, one, a peasant woman's son, unofficially. To his children's delight, he joyfully outdid them at childishness, a boisterous paternal festival. He bred horses and kept bees. At the age of sixty-three, he took up the study of Hebrew. After getting that down, he decided to learn how to ride a bicycle. It was the crowning touch.

In 1865, two years into the writing of *War and Peace,* Tolstoy remarked to a younger colleague that the artist's purpose is "to compel us to love life in all its countless and inexhaustible manifestations." Who could seem better suited to the task than a man with so exceptional a gift for living? If superabundant talent and sheer force of vitality were sufficient to ensure a man's happiness, his would surely have been among the happiest of lives. But in the end all this energy and high accomplishment and worldly pleasure brought him small enjoyment, and even great pain.

For it was not vitality and its myriad joys that he ultimately revered; rather, it was goodness. Turgenev would have loved to have had Tolstoy's vital gifts—provided he could have had them and still remain Turgenev—but for Tolstoy they were a source of anguish. In A.N. Wilson's tersely elegant summation, "The fates . . . showered upon this improbable recipient imaginative gifts . . . almost without parallel. He [feared] them, *et dona ferentes* [and the gifts they bore]." The more fortune smiled on him, the more he grimaced and fretted; he was afflicted with the conviction that almost everything a man could want he should in fact abhor and renounce, for the sake of his soul's one true need.

It was in childhood that he discovered what that need was, although then he did not feel it as a need at all, but as utter fulfillment. "Happy, happy, irrecoverable days of childhood! How can one fail to love and cherish its memories?" In Tolstoy's first novel, *Childhood, Boyhood, and Youth,* published in installments between 1852 and 1857, the narrator, Eugene Irtenyev, recalls his wondrous childhood comprehension of the world's perfection. Enveloped in the ardent tenderness of his mother's love, he felt God's love, too, enfolding all the world in its embrace. Years later, during adolescence, looking out from his window at a flawless spring afternoon, Eugene feels again an intimation of this same perfection, and understands the moral teaching that it bears: "Everything spoke to me of beauty, happiness, and virtue; told me that each of these was quite easy and attainable for me, that the one could not be without the others, and even that beauty, happiness, and virtue were one and the same thing."

By the time Tolstoy wrote *Childhood, Boyhood, and Youth,* such happiness, for him, was already sadly torn. Tolstoy's powers of mind, sharp-toothed, swift, and relentless, were unloosed at an early age, and they gave those blessed certainties of the childish soul a mauling. Like Eugene Irtenyev, the young Tolstoy philosophized just enough to undo "the convictions which, for [his] life's happiness, [he] ought never to have dared to disturb." Tolstoy came to question everything he had cherished most; his skepticism, however, was not that of the born philosopher, at ease among endless vistas of uncertainty, but rather that of an unsettled soul, in dire need of refuge. Once he had thought sufficiently to cast all into doubt, what moved him to think further was not the joy of questioning but the need to have an answer.

He knew what he *wanted* the answer to be. Spiritually dispossessed, he tried to think his way back to the certainty of God's ultimate loving goodness that he had once found in his family's love and that had seemed to offer protection from all sorrow. Unable to recover the path by means of his intellect, he relied on his memory of the old feelings to guide him. In his diary he wrote, "I believe in goodness and love it, but I don't know what can show me the way to it. . . . It is better to do good, without knowing how one knows what it is, and not to think about it."

All his life he was to live—or at least try to live—according to this irrational and uncertain wisdom, yet all his life he was to suffer from the need for a wisdom that his exacting reason could certify.

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To think about the ultimate questions was painful for Tolstoy, sometimes even dangerous, but he could not stop thinking about them. "I must work with my brain. I know I would have been happier if I hadn't known this sort of work. But God set me on this path: I must follow it." His soul at odds with his mind, he prayed with all his strength to a loving and merciful God Who, he periodically declared, most likely did not exist.

There were times when his confusion amounted to nihilism, and his youth was among the most distressing of these times. The swirling winds of his doubt swept away the path of virtue, and he found himself in the well-rutted track of the aristocratic pleasure-life. He dressed with elegance, cut an imperious figure, and tended to despise the drab, the stammering, the socially unclean. He got knee-walking drunk, gambled away piles of money, flirted with the decent young women and spent his nights with the indecent ones, usually Gypsies or prostitutes. The sort of life he led seemed natural enough to most of those living it, and he had quite a liking for it himself; yet he sensed, intermittently at any rate, that something fine in him was being disfigured. From his first diary entry, which he made when he was eighteen and taking the cure for gonorrhea, he recorded his struggle to renounce "the disorderly life . . . [that is] a consequence of the early corruption of the soul."

As formidable a nemesis as Tolstoy's sexual compulsion was for him, or his laziness, or his despair, more pernicious and discomfiting still was the social compulsion that overpowered him: his vanity. In 1852, at the age of twenty-four, he observed, "Throughout my diary one main idea and desire can be seen—to be rid of the vanity which was oppressing me and ruining all my pleasures, and to search for ways to rid myself of it." His attempt to analyze the vice rapidly acquired an uncontrollable emotional momentum and became a diatribe eloquent with disgust and shame:

> It's a sort of moral sickness like leprosy—it doesn't destroy any one part but disfigures the whole—it insinuates itself gradually and imperceptibly and then develops throughout the whole organism; there is no manifestation of life which it doesn't infect; it's like venereal disease—if it's driven out of one part it appears with greater force in another.

Tolstoy's understanding of this moral plague was to inform his whole life's work. That understanding derived chiefly from his beloved Jean-Jacques Rousseau, whom A.N. Wilson correctly calls "the greatest single influence on the development of Tolstoy's thought." *Émile*, Rousseau's masterpiece on the ideal education of democratic man, offers his fullest treatment of vanity, or *amour-propre*—Tolstoy himself occasionally uses the French term—but it is in a note to the *Discourse on Inequality* that Rousseau most succinctly defines the scourge: "*Amour-propre* is only a relative sentiment, artificial and born in society, which inclines each individual to have a greater esteem for himself than for anyone else, inspires in men all the harm they do to one another, and is the true source of honor." In *Émile* Rousseau writes: ". . . what makes man essentially good is to have few needs and to compare himself little with others; what makes him wicked is to have many needs and to depend very much on opinion."

The young Tolstoy was a needy sort who lived very much for the eyes of others. So importunate was his need for admiration, so keen his sensitivity to insult, that the most commonplace social gathering became an ordeal for him. The "Rules for Society" he set down in his diary rest upon the understanding that the ordinary social intercourse of professedly convivial people is governed by the very *amour-propre* that ignites raging warfare. "At a ball, ask the most important ladies to dance. If you feel shy, don't become flustered, but carry on. Be as cold as possible and don't betray any impressions." "Don't tolerate the slightest unpleasantness or sarcasm from anyone, without paying it back twofold." Tolstoy needed Rousseau to save him from the worldly nobleman in himself, and to remind him where his true happiness lay; left on his own, he was prone to confusion.

True, in his dithering and misery he accomplished more than most happy men dream of doing, but neither the activity nor the achievement nor the admiration raised him up out of his unhappiness. Even telling the truth in his writing, which was the supreme law of art, exacerbated his pain, for he was too weak to live the rest of his life in accordance with the truth his work proclaimed. In the story "A Billiard-Marker's Notes," written in 1852, he recounts the degeneration and eventual suicide of an aristocratic young man who knew how he ought to live but fell into the life that men of his type were expected to lead. His suicide note has a familiar ring:

> God gave me everything man can desire: wealth, a name, intelligence, and noble aspirations. I wanted to enjoy myself and trampled in the mire all that was good in me. . . . And how good and happy I might have been had I trodden the path which on entering life my fresh mind and my childlike, genuine feeling indicated to me! More than once I tried to escape from the rut in which my life was moving and get back to that bright path. I told myself: I will use all the will I have—but I could not. . . . Thoughts of what will be beyond the tomb and of what will be said tomorrow about my death at Aunt Rtishcheva's present themselves to me with equal force.

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Tolstoy's moral lucidity here is pitiless, even savage, as it tends to be in the diaries as well, although A.N. Wilson, for one, is unable to recognize the honesty with which Tolstoy saw himself and recorded what he saw. According to Wilson, "like many self-obsessed people, [Tolstoy] was entirely lacking in self-knowledge." In writing fiction, says Wilson, Tolstoy enjoyed the power of "arranging events to make them tolerable to himself," and Wilson adds: "One cannot exaggerate the extent to which Tolstoy's fiction is his version of how he wanted life to be." But to exaggerate that is exactly what Wilson does. In fact, one of Tolstoy's rarest gifts was his clear awareness of how painfully far his own life fell short of what he wanted it to be, and no writer who has put his own life to the uses of fiction has spared himself less than Tolstoy. He knew only too well that the success of his writing in no way mitigated the failures of his life.

Since art would not save him, he dreamed of something that would—specifically, a woman's love to restore his innocence, empower him to live rightly and in utter happiness. "Love is man's one vocation and happiness on earth," he declared to Valeriya Arsenyeva, the daughter of a neighboring landowner whose guardian he became on her father's death and with whom he fell in love during the summer of 1856. She was twenty, seven years younger than he, and his letters to her were full of the sad but hopeful wisdom of "a man morally old, who did many foolish things in his youth for which he has paid with the happiness of the best years of his life, and who has now found for himself both a purpose and a vocation. . . ."

In the end, however, he found Valeriya insufficiently substantial for the noble love he had in mind. (The failed romance did move him to write the fine novella *Family Happiness,* about the way love deepens and matures in the early years of a marriage.) Only six years later did he find the woman he knew was meant for him, Sonya Behrs, a doctor's daughter, just eighteen: "A child! It could be!" She was pretty; she sang; she wrote; she was devout and good as only a child could be: she was perfect, and she terrified him. Tolstoy suddenly stopped short—afraid he might be in love with love and not with her, afraid that in any case she could not possibly love him—and pronounced himself unsuitable for married happiness; a nature like his was intended for something else altogether, for an art to be pursued in solitude. "A monastery, work—that's your vocation, and from its height you can look down calmly and gladly at other people's love and happiness." That, however, was precisely what he could never do. His literary vocation was in fact to be the supreme artist of family happiness, and that vocation could not be fulfilled until he was the head of his own loving and happy family.

He overcame his misgivings, which were plentiful and recurred frequently. Once married, he found himself happier than he had thought he ever could be. Yet before long, he began to see that this happiness too was unstable, as happiness based on luck and not on virtue was bound to be: "All the conditions for happiness have come together for me. Often the only thing missing (all this time) is the awareness that I've done everything that *I ought to* have done in order to enjoy to the full what has been given me, and to repay others, *the whole world,* by my work for what they have given me." For Tolstoy, happiness could not be happiness if it was mere accident. He needed to feel sure there was a divine warrant, that the unexampled joys of marriage were God's reward for his having lived the life he was intended to live.

In time, he attained the precise equilibrium that was required for his first great artistic achievement; he found himself just happy enough with his wife and children, and just unhappy enough with himself, to undertake with joyous diligence the writing of *War and Peace* (1865-69) and later *Anna Karenina* (1875-77)—a greater novel still, and one in which he subjects family happiness to the most searching ordeal.

The fifteen years during which Tolstoy himself managed to hold on to this equilibrium were the happiest of his life—probably among the happiest of any life. (During this time he wrote in his diaries hardly at all.) Sonya's younger brother, who spent his every youthful summer with the Tolstoys, wrote in his memoirs, "I cannot sufficiently describe the joyous and happy frame of mind that usually reigned at Yasnaya Polyana. Its source was always Leo Nikolayevich." The writing of *War and Peace,* which was to repay "all the world" for Tolstoy's undeserved happiness, ended up celebrating his deserved happiness.

But it, too, vanished; the fear of death dissolved it. Early in his marriage Tolstoy had mentioned in his diary the worry that his happiness might be impermanent, that death would come and sweep it all away forever. He had looked away from this fear, and he had forgotten it. It had not gone away, though. Once he mustered the courage to look eternity in the face, it stared him down, and left him shaken. The sight convinced him that the meaning of his life had eluded him after all, that family happiness was merely a diversion from the horror of eternity's unendurable emptiness.

Unable to understand what life was for, he found that he could not live. Death was everywhere he looked, and, pitiless, inexplicable, it blasted all life's joys. Art, family, prosperity, fame: none of these meant a thing any more. All he wanted was to die, to end the horror of a meaningless life. "And all this befell me at a time when all around me I had what is considered complete good fortune," he wrote in *A Confession,* the great autobiographical essay he finished in 1882.

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He searched everywhere for the wisdom that could save him from despair. He ransacked the words of the wisest men—Socrates, Solomon, Schopenhauer, Buddha—but found at the heart of their reputed wisdom only disgust with, or even horror at, life: "Happy is he who has not been born. . . ." He consulted the latest findings of modern science, which informed him that he was no more than "a transitory, casual cohesion of particles." At last, having perceived that his powers of reason could not provide him with life's meaning, but could only make clear its meaninglessness, he concluded (in a variant of the conclusion he had reached once before in his youth) that rational knowledge itself leads inexorably to the longing for death, while irrational knowledge, of the sort possessed by millions of ordinary people, gives the strength to live happily.

So it was that Tolstoy came to seek, and claimed to find, his happiness in the religious faith of this great multitude. He rejoined the flock of the Orthodox Church, and for a while was a paragon of conventional piety. However, before long he decided the Orthodox Christ bore only a superficial resemblance to the true Christ, whom he discovered by studying the Gospels with utmost intentness and by searching his own heart. What institutional Christianity had persistently ignored in Christ's teaching, Tolstoy wrote in *What I Believe* (1884), was the injunction "that men must create their own happiness here," in this world.

To create his happiness, Tolstoy sought to reduce his seigneurial way of life to an exemplary peasant starkness. He denounced his previous writings as immoral amusements pandering to the wicked tastes of the privileged classes, and he refused to accept any money from the sale of his books. He swore off meat, alcohol, and tobacco. He toiled in the fields with the rest of the peasants, and he took up cobbling, in order to have a truly useful skill. He even emptied his own chamber pot.

With withering logic, Tolstoy reduced life's "countless and inexhaustible manifestations" to a series of problems that needed solving so that the reign of happiness could begin. So long as any man was miserable, no man could be happy; to concern oneself with anything but the poverty, hunger, cruelty, and injustice that remained to be eradicated was to miss the point of life entirely. Tolstoy entered the political world with a view toward putting an end to politics. The existence of government in any form was inimical to happiness, he maintained, for every state was based on the evil of violent force. He inveighed tirelessly against the Russian state and church. When, in 1881, revolutionary terrorists murdered Czar Alexander II, Tolstoy wrote fecklessly to his son and successor asking him to spare the assassins' lives; such saintly forgiveness would inspire all Russia with goodness and love. The Czar, not unreasonably, opted for hanging.

The truth that Tolstoy found at last in the Gospels changed his life utterly. Or so he proclaimed: "And I became assured of this truth and was reassured, and have joyfully lived twenty years of my life since then and am now joyfully approaching my death." That was not the whole story, however. In his own diary, in 1897, he wrote that he had thought his new faith would be "a haven and a respite. But it wasn't so. The real difficulties have begun and are continuing and will probably stay with me till death." His wife observed in her diary that he was "unhappy as ever even now that he has faith."

He saw to it that he was not alone in his unhappiness. Family life became a pitched battle of the spirit. Tolstoy berated his wife as the epitome of pagan selfishness, and blamed her obstinate benightedness for his own misery; she mocked his spitefulness, vanity, and hypocrisy. "Only old men and children, free from sexual desire, live a true life," he declared; in his novella *Father Sergius* a monk chops off one of his fingers to help himself resist a seductive beauty. Sonya taunted Tolstoy with his own irrepressible goatishness, which mortified him: "I'm sad, sad. Lord, help me, burn up the old carnal man in me."

But sex was a simple and straightforward evil, compared with *amour-propre*. The pride of self-abasement was an unconquerable temptation; Tolstoy hated his desire for saintliness at eighty as he had his desire for women at eighteen, although he was no more successful in overcoming the one than the other. Sonya took a malicious delight in his failures. Finally enough was enough. At the age of eighty-two Tolstoy sneaked off from home, and died days later in a railroad station to which his disciples refused Sonya admittance. It was as unhappy an end as one could have imagined for such a life.

Writing in his diary in 1905, sick of art, sick of himself, Tolstoy analyzed the achievement of his that everybody else most esteemed: "I have all the vices, and to a very high degree. . . . My own salvation is that I know it, and have been fighting—fighting all my life—against it. For this reason they call me a psychologist."

It is clear, though—and not only from his later life—that to his own mind he was foremost a moralist, fighting for the sake of his soul and others', and that he was a psychologist to that end. What gives Tolstoy's art its main force is the tumultuous coexistence in his characters' souls of longings as potent as his own for both the false happiness and the true. He is expert at observing the force with which, and the angle at which, the contrary desires in a soul collide, and he is superb at calculating the effect of these collisions: the

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disturbance they produce in a person's thoughts, feelings, dreams, demeanor, appetite, complexion, gait; the efforts one makes to shake off these disturbances; the degree to which these efforts increase one's true happiness or unhappiness.

Tolstoy is often spoken of as the master of rendering sensation—what it feels like to skate gracefully or to walk bearishly, to ride in a sleigh, to be caught in a snowstorm, to mow a field of hay, to dance with someone incomparably exciting, to be injured or ill, to go hungry or to slip a platter of oysters down the hatch, to ride a horse or even to be a horse. But his unsurpassed mastery really lies in something deeper. What he is intent on rendering when he examines a body's contour, feeling, motion is the full complex of moral and even of metaphysical implication that sensation bears: the way the unseen and impalpable forces of good and evil that govern life make their presence known through these strange physical natures of ours. "The body? Why the body?" he asked in his diary, not long before he died. The answer, which in fact he had known since youth, was that the life of the body was above all the appointed trial of the soul's integrity and strength.

The current estimation of Tolstoy's writings reflects the degree to which the happiness of the animal man has come to dominate modern opinion. The Russian writer Ivan Bunin recalls how his father laughingly told him about the way certain neighbors of theirs read *War and Peace*: some could not get enough of War but skipped Peace altogether, while the others read every word of Peace but preferred to give War a miss. Today the descendants of the former rule, although the lines of descent are confusing. Underlying the 20th-century appreciation of Tolstoy's War and the denigration of his Peace is the modern cult of the body. It is the physical horror of war that makes it supremely repulsive to modern eyes; it is physical pleasure, especially sexual pleasure, that furnishes the chief attraction of peace. Modern admirers of Tolstoy's War tend to admire it precisely because war is the worst thing they can think of. Which is not to suggest they dislike Peace; it is rather that they do not care for Tolstoy's quaint and confining notions of how Peace is best spent.

Contrary to the prevailing opinion, however, it is in writing of peace—especially of love, and of its most beguiling perversions—that Tolstoy is peerless, and it is in his understanding of war—indeed, of political life in general—that he is most wanting. What he really knows about happiness and unhappiness is not what most people think he knows.

In *War and Peace* the first sight Tolstoy provides of men engaged in soldiering, a Russian regimental inspection, cuts to the vicious *amour-propre* he sees at the heart of the enterprise. When the general spots a soldier dressed inappropriately for the occasion, in a fancy dress coat, he erupts at the company commander, plainly reveling in the chance to unloose his lavish contempt: "He was evidently pleased at his own display of anger and . . . wished to find a further excuse for wrath." The general then lights into the peculiarly dressed soldier—an officer who has been reduced to the ranks for insubordination, but who has received permission to dress as a gentleman. The soldier, Dolokhov, stares right back at the general "with his clear, insolent eyes," and announces that, although he must obey orders, he will not endure insults. The general, still angry but acknowledging the gentleman's sense of honor, asks him, politely, to change his coat.

Tolstoy's introduction to the military temperament emphasizes the inane anger that flares up when one man's pride strikes hard against another's. Even among men who are fighting on the same side, there is an endless combat of wills. Where *amour-propre* is the guiding passion and each man aches to prove himself supreme, the warlike emotions know no rest; one's friends, too, are one's foes. In the middle of combat, a Russian general and a German colonel, colleagues who despise each other, launch into loud disagreement about tactics "with the sole object of offending one another." At a Russian council of war, every general—except Kutuzov, Tolstoy's military hero—is bent above all on showing himself the best man in the place, and no one (except Kutuzov, who dozes through the nonsense) much cares what the best strategy might really be.

Tolstoy's Prince Andrei Bolkonsky, quoting Montesquieu, declares that honor is the predominant passion among men living under monarchies; the undertaking of Tolstoy's art is the demolition of this cult of honor and the restoration of natural morality. The passion for glory, Tolstoy teaches, stunts and twists the human soul, and men have grown so accustomed to their own spiritual deformity that they revere as all but divine the most misshapen among them: Napoleon. The "confident, self-complacent happiness" of the villainous Napoleon, and the "great happiness" Prince Andrei feels on his way to his first battle with that enemy (whom he also worships), rest on this willful mass delusion.

Andrei is not going to war in defense of his country, or even of his own family. As far as he is concerned, this immense and gruesome collision between nations is taking place so that other men might marvel at his courage and skill in the face of death. Like Napoleon, he is possessed by a warlike spirit of maniacal frivolity. The suffering of millions is but the occasion for his conquest of happiness. Although over the course of the novel Andrei's spiritual life takes many turns, and although he does in the end find a happiness that is true and durable, and that sees him through the pain of his slow dying, Tolstoy shows that it is a second-best happiness, for someone who

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learned too late how to live. It is, rather, Pierre Bezukhov who learns in time, who marries Andrei's sometime fiancée, Natasha Rostov, and who lives in blessed family happiness.

Only by renouncing the delusions that govern public life, Tolstoy contends, can a man hope to find happiness. Insofar as men act in the name of nations, they live in servitude to a monstrous unreality, which has founded its virtually universal dominion on vanity and on the tendency of every human being unthinkingly to live as he sees others living. Indeed, the greater the political man, the more helplessly he lives the life that Tolstoy repeatedly likens to that of an insect swarm. To pursue the chimerical happiness of supreme power and glory is to become, instead, "history's slave."

ALTHOUGH Tolstoy does not cite Machiavelli by name, his teaching is principally a refutation of *The Prince,* which Napoleon took as his gospel. Machiavelli observes matter-of-factly that it is man's "natural and ordinary desire to acquire"—to acquire wealth, power, renown. If a man has the prudence to understand what he must do in order to get what he wants, and the ability to do these necessary things, then he will be happy, *felice*; if not, he will end unhappily. Tolstoy, by contrast, declares that no man can predict the consequences of any political or military action he might take, and that therefore no one really has the power to make events turn out the way he wants. What might seem to be chance, but is in fact Providence, invariably overrules human presumption, as Tolstoy purports to demonstrate in describing grand military designs brought to nothing by the confusion of battle. Events never unfold according to the intention of the great man who believes himself their master, but rather according to the unfathomable will of God, which Tolstoy plainly believes himself to have fathomed rather more deeply than the nearest contender.

Yet Tolstoy is mistaken. The thunderous profundities with which he explains God's Own History seem, indeed, shrill, callow, and even vain when set beside the work of a great statesman and historian like Winston Churchill. Churchill, too, knew what soldiers suffered, and felt their pain sharply; like Tolstoy's favorite, General Kutuzov, he was notoriously quick to tears. Unlike Tolstoy, however, Churchill did not permit his deep compassion the privilege of blind moral outrage, which leaps without thinking—or at least without thinking hard enough—from the observation of war's cruelty to the wholesale condemnation of political life as men have always known it. Churchill's is the wiser pity, and it does not fail to honor the familiar political virtues.

For Tolstoy, the murderous horror of warfare is sufficient proof that there is no such thing as the political greatness which men have traditionally honored. Terrible as war is, what else can it be? Churchill shows us. Seeing that political life—war inevitably included—is the natural human state, Churchill refuses to lament or to execrate that condition of existence, but accepts it as simple unalterable fact, and acknowledges it as the ground as well of much that is honorable, heroic, decent, even charitable in human action.

Churchill understood, of course, how much in war depends on chance, and he was also inclined to give Providence its due as well; yet he understood that, in determining the course of events, what tends to be truly critical is in fact human decision, the choices made in the highest reaches of political and military command. Churchill's account of World War I, *The World Crisis,* which is his greatest history, is a brilliant study in "the sublime responsibility of men": he describes the appalling imprudence of kings, ministers, and generals that caused the war's then-unparalleled destruction—the pathos with which he renders the carnage rivals Tolstoy's own—and he presents the prudent alternatives to the prevailing imbecility that could have averted the worst of the horror. Even in the most wretched debacle, Churchill recognizes the honorable men who tried to prevent disaster.

On the eve of World War I Churchill wrote to his wife, "I am interested, geared up & happy. Is it not horrible to be built like that?" He knew it was both horrible and magnificent to be built like that. Churchill clearly relished the trial of his personal merit that war provided—the chance to show himself, and the world, what strength and splendor were his—and he never felt more joyously alive than when engaged in war. That is, Churchill loved war in a way that Tolstoy attempted to prove no one should: for his pride's sake, as the chance to display his greatness.

"I pray God to forgive me for such fearful moods of levity," Churchill wrote of his wartime exhilaration, and one hopes that he was forgiven. His passion for honor was indispensable to his moral greatness, and that greatness was indispensable to the preservation of civilized life. The incapacity to understand a man like Churchill, to appreciate his genius and excellence, was perhaps Tolstoy's gravest failure of imagination.

IT IS in peace, then, in the joys of love, of the family, that Tolstoy presents the real hope of human happiness.

The happiness he exalts in *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina* tends, it is true, to be a four-square, stolid affair, maybe even a bit on the dull side. Although intimations of ecstasy might herald its approach, its presence consists chiefly in the orderly succession of placid days, each bearing a hearty but unexceptional portion of contentment in love and work. Still, although such happiness might cease to thrill, it does not fail to satisfy. It is as durable as human things can be.

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One comes to regard all of life by the light it casts, the radiance of deserved joy that God grants to those who see how they ought to live and who fulfill their destinies.

Possessing this happiness makes one grateful even for the cruelest pains of one's earlier life; one's sufferings seem in retrospect to have been necessary trials, proving one's worthiness for the prize that was waiting all along. But the quest for happiness always holds the danger of tragic failure. The way is a perilous one, strewn with human wreckage, the broken remains of those beguiled by simulacra; it is as much in his accounts of these various failures as in his accounts of the rare triumphs that Tolstoy honors the moral heroism of those who win family happiness and who hold on to it.

To the enlightened modern reader of *Anna Karenina,* the principal impedimenta to such happiness would seem to lie not within but without, in outworn and restrictive institutions. People no longer have to suffer the way Anna did. Liberal divorce laws and a little more tolerance in general, the thinking goes, would have solved her problem.

The general inclination these days is to feel sympathetic, at the very least, toward Anna and her adulterous lover, the dashing officer Vronsky. Anna, after all, has the misfortune to be married to a man who does not know what love is. Karenin is a creature of the purest *amour-propre.* He lives solely for his place in the world's estimation; a bureaucrat of estimable rank, he has no purpose behind his work but the craving continually to advance. He thinks nothing of it when he sees his wife talking passionately with Vronsky at a social affair; addressing Anna on the matter, he declares that he has no intention of becoming jealous, for jealousy is "an insulting and degrading feeling. . . ." As for Anna, she sees how pinched her husband's nature is, and thinks disdainfully that her infidelity would not affect him at all if Society were not there to notice it.

Next, Vronsky. D.H. Lawrence—in some ways Tolstoy's antithesis among the great novelists—chastised Tolstoy for envying "the healthy passionate male in the young Vronsky" and for therefore turning him into someone "abject and pitiable." For Lawrence and for his followers, Vronsky represents a modern erotic ideal, and Tolstoy is perverse in his refusal to honor it. And indeed, beside the jug-eared nullity of a Karenin, Vronsky does excite with his bold erotic gleam: Karenin's failure as a husband is Vronsky's triumph as a lover, at least in the crudest sense.

Yet as a triumphant lover, Vronsky values love less than triumph. When he meets Anna, he admires her obvious charms—her grace, her tender expression, her insistent vitality—but what really incites him is her apparent indifference to *his* charms. In the perversion of love that is Vronsky's desire, *amour-propre* and animal passion are fused. Tolstoy makes it clear that the consummation of that desire is the equivalent of murder, and that Vronsky's *amour-propre* is the trigger man.

Vronsky and Anna's adultery is more passionate than such things generally are among people of their set, yet very different from what Tolstoy thinks of as love. Anna might have actually been capable of loving Vronsky, but he does not have it in him to love her; and his inadequacy corrodes her own feelings. Informing Vronsky that she has told her husband about them, Anna hopes he will urge her to leave Karenin and go off with him; for this, she is willing to abandon even her beloved son. Instead, Vronsky first imagines how proud he will look when he fights a duel with Karenin, then suddenly recalls a friend's warning that the wrong sort of romance can wreck a career: ". . . he knew he could not pass on the thought to her." In the need for this reticence is a ruinous betrayal. Vronsky is more like Karenin at this instant than he could ever admit to himself.

The fatality of Vronsky and Anna's romance is not the tragic consequence of passion so extraordinary that society cannot endure it; rather, it is the dismal end of love that simply is never good enough. The killing flaws are not in the society the lovers defy but in the lovers themselves. Love like theirs is its own punishment, just as Tolstoy thought war to be. And such failings are timeless. If Anna and Vronsky were to meet in New York during the late 20th century, their passion most likely would not wind up getting them killed, as it does in the novel, but it would probably leave them terminally wretched, with a touch of death in their souls. Men are essentially the same in all times and places, Tolstoy believed, and in *Anna Karenina* he portrays the spiritual havoc that souls like Anna's and Vronsky's, embracing some false happiness as true, will inevitably cause, wherever and whenever they might happen to meet.

UNHAPPINESS is the rule in this world of Tolstoy's, and happiness seems all the happier for its rarity. In *Anna Karenina,* Kitty Shcherbatsky and Constantin Levin, like Pierre Bezukhov and Natasha Rostov, and Nicholas Rostov and Marya Bolkonsky, in *War and Peace,* come to enjoy this happiness: a life of heroic normality transfigured by love, which is the surest approach to knowledge of the divine. Through zigzag careers of misleading speculation and wayward passion, they are preserved by some undying sense of what life truly requires, until they reach an end to their tortuous questing.

The contrast between Levin and Kitty's love and Vronsky and Anna's is revealing in every detail. Vronsky's early infatuation with Anna induces a kind of rapture of self-regard, in which he stares right through the people around him as if they did not exist; Levin's joy at his engagement to Kitty fills him with a powerful surge of love for everyone he sees. As romance goes bad, Anna tries to make every young man she meets fall in love

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with her; Kitty, by contrast, is nonplussed when a houseguest flirts with her, and Levin throws the rascal out. Anna scarcely pays any mind to the child she has with Vronsky, and in order to preserve her sexual charm, she takes pains not to have any more children; Kitty is a loving mother, and her eroticism serves the fullness of her sexuality.

It is not hard to tell the happy from the unhappy in Tolstoy's world—which is not to say that unhappiness is without forces in reserve to break in just when happiness itself seems a sure thing. Like Anna and Vronsky, like Tolstoy himself, Levin finds himself drawn to death, and all but irresistibly. Levin has no trouble living his life so long as he simply lives; it is thinking about life's meaning that becomes the bane of his existence, and nearly the end of it. What saves him is hearing one peasant speak of another who "'lives for his soul and remembers God.'" Restored to sanity, Levin is able to identify the thing that almost killed him: "Ah yes! Pride!"—specifically, pride of intellect, "mind-swindling."

All this strikes Levin with the force of revelation, but in fact it is no more than a reminder of what love has already taught: that the loving soul enjoys a privileged approach to the mysteries of life which reason is denied. Early in their marriage, as Levin listens to Kitty cry out in labor with their first child, he recognizes that he has felt similar feelings once before, watching his brother die of consumption: ". . . that sorrow and this joy were equally beyond the usual conditions of life: they were like openings in that usual life through which something higher became visible. . . . [The] soul soared, as then, to heights it had never known before, at which reason could not keep up with it." Levin, who is not a praying man, prays then, as readily and as intently as in childhood. And when at last his son is born, he returns suddenly "to the old everyday world, now radiant with the light of such new joy that it was insupportable."

For Tolstoy, the impulse that moves one person truly to love another is nearly the same as that which moves one to prayer; and the most urgent of prayers, which begs for assurance that life is not without meaning, may be answered by the existence of another human being whom one cannot but love. Here, for Tolstoy, is the heart of family happiness, the truth on which it rests: the ordinary irradiated by the majestic, the incomprehensible, the godly.

HOWEVER remarkable the happiness of the worthy souls in Tolstoy's great novels, one cannot but think how much greater still must have been the happiness of bringing them to imagined life. In the writing of these books, there had to be such ecstasy as few men ever know, the pleasure of artistic genius in full command of its powers. As in Mozart's composition, Socrates' philosophizing, Michelangelo's painting and sculpture and poetry and architecture, there is a potency that makes it possible to speak of a man as being godlike.

The truest things Tolstoy knew about happiness went into his art; that art, however, could not ensure his own happiness. He even came to think he was better off without art, at a time when he thought too much for his own good—and yet did not think deeply enough, did not remember what it was he had really lived by during the time of his greatest happiness. His late-blooming career as a holy man brought him no nearer to God than his life as husband, father, and writer had done; and indeed pushed him farther away. For that earlier life, the one he denounced and cast aside, truly was a blessed one: a life of sublime earthly love, in family happiness and in the artistic vocation that honored this happiness; human love embraced and sustained by divine. It ended unhappily for Tolstoy; yet in the best of his writing, his truest happiness will stand through time, its radiance undiminished, showing others what might be possible.

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Kaplan's Big Deal

A Story

Joseph Epstein

IN THOSE days Kaplan had an ambitious pompadour, kept aloft by Wildroot Cream Oil and a comb that he carried in his back pocket. In the other back pocket he kept a shoehorn. Working after school and on Monday and Thursday evenings and all day Saturday, he was, at seventeen, the ace part-time salesman at Maling Brothers Shoes on South State Street. It was at Maling Brothers that he first discovered he had this knack, ability, gift—call it what you like—for persuasion. His customers at Maling Brothers were thick-ankled Polish women and Irish girls, who worked in the Loop as secretaries, file clerks, saleswomen at Carson's, Goldblatts, and The Fair Store. He flattered them, pretended their feet were smaller than they were, quickly sensed their susceptibilities, and usually sent them home with two or three pairs of shoes when they had come in to buy only one. "Shelly," said Sam Margolis, the old shoe dog who managed the South State Street store, "you are a natural, a born salesman."

When his father, in his fifty-first year, died of a heart attack Kaplan dropped out of the University of Wisconsin, where he was in his third year, majoring in marketing, to return to Chicago. He acquired a real-estate license, began selling what were known as "starter" homes to young Jewish couples then moving to Skokie. He was very good at it. He followed up on even the flimsiest leads, spent tedious hours on the telephone in the attempt to get new listings, worked twelve- and fourteen-hour days, often seven days a week. He could enter into the dreams of these young couples—they came from much the same background that he did—and play to them in a quiet but efficient way. Ruth Rosenzweig, the broker out of whose office he worked, marveled at his ability to close a sale, and on occasion she brought him in to help on her own deals, splitting the fees. "Sheldon," she once told him, "some day you are going to be a very rich man."

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Kaplan's mother died, after a horrendous two-year bout with leukemia, when he was twenty-five. He had been living with her in the two-flat building his father had bought on Rockwell Avenue in West Rogers Park a few years after World War II. An only child, he was his mother's sole heir; the estate, including the building, came to roughly eighty grand. Kaplan put most of the money into real-estate deals of his own on the near North Side that in later years would pay off handsomely. Like him, his father had been an only child. His mother had a brother in the printing business on the West Coast, but there had been a falling out. Kaplan was alone in the world, unconnected, responsible for himself only.

He rather liked the arrangement. He had loved his parents; he knew they had loved him, that he could count on them if he needed them. But beyond the age of fifteen or so he didn't really need them. Theirs was not a family in which one brought one's troubles to the dinner table to chew over along with the brisket. His father, he knew, kept most of his business dealings from his mother; if his mother were unhappy, she apparently never said anything about it to her husband and certainly never did to her son. Sheldon's upbringing had emphasized self-sufficiency—learn to stand on your own two feet, work out your own problems, don't leave a mess, be a man.

After his mother's death, Sheldon sold off the furniture, her jewelry, her Persian lamb coat and mink jacket, the silver, the china—the works. All he kept was a shoe box of old photographs, many of them sepia-colored, from the 20's and 30's, of his long deceased grandparents, of his parents posed on beaches or in front of cars, of himself as a child in sailor or cowboy suits or sitting cross-legged in the front row of class photos in grade school. He moved into a furnished studio apartment in the recently rehabilitated Pratt-Lane Hotel, off Sheridan Road, ate all his meals out. With long hours of work and the easy freedom of the young bachelor life—all-night poker games, out-of-town sports events, the pursuit of women—all he really needed was a place to sleep, shower, and change clothes.

Kaplan was thirty-two when he bought Mid-City Pontiac. All evidence of his pompadour was gone, his hair having thinned out and receded.

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He had moved from his studio apartment at the Pratt-Lane to a one-bedroom suite at the Belden-Stratford Hotel across from Lincoln Park. Colonel Jacob Arvey, the man who helped win the presidential nomination for Adlai Stevenson and was the most powerful Jew in Chicago politics, lived on the same floor. An old man now, the Colonel one day introduced himself and ever after, always the politician, remembered Kaplan's name, addressing him as Sheldon. A number of well-off, older Jewish bachelors and widowers lived at the Belden. Most of Kaplan's friends had married and by now had young children. He felt no such yearning. He liked living in hotels, owning nothing but his clothes, his real estate, his business—staying loose, liquid, alone. "So tell me, Shelly," his friend Morty Siegel once joked about his preference for remaining as unencumbered as possible, "where do you rent your cuff-links?"

KAPLAN enjoyed the car business, at least for now. That he knew next to nothing about cars—didn't, technically, own one himself—proved no impediment. What he liked was the action, deals every day. At Mid-City Pontiac he was the sales manager as well as the owner. In more than half the sales, he was called in to help close. At that crucial moment, when the customer and salesman were a few hundred bucks apart, the salesmen were instructed to say, "Look, why don't we go in and talk with the boss, Mr. Kaplan, maybe he can do better for you than I can?" In they would come, the customers, nervous women, angry men, middle-aged middle-class couples, young guys with tattoos and duck's-ass hairdos interested in buying the hot car in his line, the GTO—all with one thing in common: the certainty that they were in danger of getting cheated and the determination not to let it happen.

Kaplan would come around his large desk to greet them. On the desk was a photograph in a double silver frame of his friend Bert Schwartz's two young daughters; if someone assumed that these were his own children and that he was a family man, that was fine with Kaplan. He had taken to wearing Hickey-Freeman suits, expensive and of a conservative cut, to make himself look older and more substantial. After having been introduced to the customers, he would sit down with them in front of his desk, and he would usually begin by asking his salesman, "Larry, are the Gombergs happy with the car they've chosen? If they are, then all we have to negotiate is the best deal, and I am confident we can, from both our points of view."

Then his reading of character would come into play. What was at stake here for the customer? Money? Pride? Fear of seeming a fool? Some customers needed soothing, others bullying. Everyone came in with the firm idea that car dealers were thieves. This was a given. Some people needed to emerge feeling that they had stolen from thieves and thus were themselves extremely clever. Others needed to feel that he, Sheldon Kaplan, president, Mid-City Pontiac, was an exception, a gentleman and not a monster, a sensible businessman looking for repeat sales and not a pig out to gobble up all he could every time out. The trick was to know what they needed. Whatever they needed, Kaplan gave them, and in the bargain made out very well for himself.

In Kaplan's nine years in the car business, he must have run through something close to a hundred and fifty salesmen. Some stayed a few years, but the more normal tenure was four or five months; a few didn't make it through a month. Something better came along, to hear them tell it, or an ex-wife was after them for alimony, or the Chicago winters got them down. They left without much ceremony. Usually they would call to announce they wouldn't be coming in and provide an address to which any owed commissions were to be sent. A strange crowd, Kaplan thought, men whose only skill was for making other people say yes.

A few years before Kaplan sold Mid-City he hired a salesman named Sy Bourget, a fabled figure, a salesman's salesman. Bourget—he didn't pronounce the *t* in his name—was so good, it used to be said, that he could sell aluminum siding to people who lived in high-rise buildings. Shortly after World War II, Bourget was supposed to have sold a man a two-door Buick and convinced him that, if he brought it back in three months, they could convert it into a four-door. For more than three years the man kept coming back, and for more than three years Bourget was able to hold him at bay with explanations for the delay, wild promises, and general hot air, and then, when the man's patience was finally worn out, Bourget took in the two-door on a trade for a new Buick Roadmaster station wagon, loaded with extras, for which the man, being a bachelor, had absolutely no use.

SY BOURGET's real name was Seymour Bernstein. He was in his mid-fifties but looked older, especially around his eyes, which were gray and cold. His hair was white yet his pencil-thin mustache was still dark. He wore expensive shoes, flashy shirts, good suits well-pressed; he had a blue sapphire pinkie ring and was never without a manicure. Bourget had four ex-wives and, when working at Mid-City, was living with a girl in her twenties from Kentucky. Women were his weakness, he told Kaplan one night after a closing, over a steak sandwich and a double Scotch at the Black Angus. "What's your weakness, kid?"

Kaplan joked that he hadn't found it yet, though he was still awaiting X-ray results from the Mayo Clinic. Bourget made him slightly edgy. Despite all the differences between them—in age,

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in style, in success—Kaplan saw in Sy Bourget a quality he felt growing in himself: a deadening boredom with life that came from endlessly repeated examination of human motives toward the end of manipulating others to say yes. Such examination revealed everyone to have an angle, induced general distrust, gave a low view of life and its possibilities. Everyone, one discovered, was an operator, or at least wanted to be, and the only difference between people was that there were those who operated successfully and those who didn't. Winners and losers, the old story.

And women, Kaplan had begun to believe, were the most relentless operators of all. At forty-five, he had never for one day seriously considered marrying. Many of his friends were on second wives; had begun what they called—with a straight face—"second families." Perhaps it was the women Kaplan went out with. These tended to be what he thought of as high-maintenance women, the female equivalent of Mercedes and Jaguars. All were good-looking—what would be the point of going out with an unattractive woman?—and all assumed a certain high level of expenditure. These women, Kaplan decided, were essentially in business for themselves. He took them to musical comedies and expensive restaurants; sometimes he took one or another of them for a three-day weekend in Vegas, or for a week in winter to Acapulco, where he had a share in a large condominium complex. They brought along two and three suitcases filled with jars and three changes of clothes for each day; he usually had a small carry-on bag. Apart from the sex, for which his appetite had not greatly slackened, Kaplan tended to find women an encumbrance and an inconvenience.

The truth was that Kaplan didn't find women very interesting. How women found him was not a question he found very pressing. He no longer looked young. Most of the hair on his head was gone, and hair had begun to show up in dark aggressive patches on his upper back and shoulders. His stomach was still flat—he did sit-ups and played racquet ball a couple of times a week—but his body had begun to thicken, and without gaining any weight he went from a 32″ to a 34″ waist. He wore glasses for reading when he hit forty, but now he needed bifocals. Such sexiness as he possessed was owing, he knew, to his money and power. This, it turned out, made him sexy enough. Being the operators that they were, women were usually ready enough to go to bed with him, hoping to establish their indispensability in his life. None ever did. Go close a closer. What he really sought was a woman with a man's mind and a woman's body. He never found her.

KAPLAN left the car business just before his fiftieth birthday, four years after acquiring a second dealership, Mid-City Datsun, with which he had done extremely well. He was making somewhere in the neighborhood of three-quarters of a million a year, much of which he pumped into real-estate deals. But the car business had begun to bore him, so he sold his two agencies and opened a two-room office in the John Hancock Building on Michigan Avenue; the office was listed on the directory as S.K. Development. He soon became known around town as a money man, a source of venture capital. Inventors and would-be entrepreneurs wrote to him in the hope that he would back their dreams and schemes: for a geriatric dog food, a male genital deodorant, a serious cultural magazine. Each day's mail brought fresh evidence, if any were still needed, that the number of operators in the country was very close to equaling the population itself.

On the serious side, Kaplan was one of a syndicate of seventeen businessmen who bought and three years later sold the Chicago White Sox. With five other men he put up a fifty-three story condo building on Sheridan Road. He was in on hotel deals in Puerto Rico, resorts on the west coast of Mexico, private-home development for wealthy Americans in the Dominican Republic. Putting together a complex deal excited him like nothing else he had known. He loved the action.

Kaplan had paid $150 a month for his studio apartment at the Pratt-Lane; he was now paying $9,000 a month for his two-room suite at the Drake Hotel. He still didn't own a car but took cabs and, on occasion, rented limousines. He owned five suits and three pairs of shoes. He recently had had to buy a tuxedo, because, as a money man around town, he was invited to many black-tie dinners, to some of which he went. He gave impressive sums to Jewish charities, usually in honor of his mother and father, but refused all awards and public recognition of the kind that was really intended to get more money out of him. He continued to see the same kind of women, though many of them, in their late thirties and early forties, had some mileage on them and were divorced with children. In his mid-fifties, he found he had nothing to say to women in their twenties. Marriage with a woman of any age was not a serious possibility.

Kaplan lived in the world of money and deals, and lived there happily enough. Introspection was not his specialty. Yet even so, sometimes he imagined himself in his seventies—an old guy with a younger broad in tow. Less often he thought of death, of dying by himself, alone in a private room at Michael Reese or Northwestern Hospital, no next of kin, in fact no kin at all on the scene, dependent in the end on the kindness of black or Filipino nurses. Dark thoughts, best blocked out. Better to concentrate on the luxury condominium complex at Boca Raton in which he was a heavy investor, a deal that he had worked on for better than two years and that finally looked to be coming together.

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IT WAS to meet with the other major investors in the Boca Raton deal that Kaplan found himself one rainy Thursday afternoon at Midway Airport awaiting a flight to New York. The rain had caused delays. Flights were backed up. Midway, normally so much calmer than O'Hare, now took on the frenzied feel of the larger airport. Kaplan carried a small carry-on bag; it contained a fresh shirt, socks, underwear, tie, his toothbrush and shaving things, some papers he needed to go over for the deal, that day's *Wall Street Journal*, which he hadn't yet had a chance to read, and a Robert Ludlum paperback spy thriller, a hedge against the possibility of insomnia which he sometimes suffered when staying out of town.

After checking in at the counter, Kaplan found a seat and unfurled his *Wall Street Journal*. He had begun reading when he noticed a slightly bedraggled young woman, perhaps in her middle thirties, struggling with a suitcase and a large Crate & Barrel shopping bag; at her side was a boy of seven or eight. Kaplan, sitting between two empty seats, moved over one seat to his left, allowing the woman and the boy to sit together. "Thank you," she said, a French lilt to her English. The boy slipped the backpack he was wearing off his slender shoulders. "Read your book, Philippe," the woman said gently, "or go over your lessons. *Maman* will see about our seats."

From behind his newspaper, Kaplan looked down at the boy, who was seated next to him. He was shuffling through his small backpack. From it he took a school workbook; it had to do with math. On its cover was printed University of Chicago Laboratory School. The boy began working through math problems with impressive concentration. When his mother returned, she said something to him in French, which Kaplan did not understand, though the boy answered in clear American English. He held his pencil oddly; he pressed down on the page with great intensity. The expression on his face was one of the utmost seriousness.

He had black hair and blue eyes. His small features were delicate yet in no way effeminate; refined is how Kaplan would have described them. His hands were well-formed, nails clean. As Kaplan was staring at the boy's hands, his pencil point broke on the math workbook. He searched in his backpack for another, but with no luck.

"Care to borrow mine?" Kaplan asked, removing a gold Cross pencil from his shirt pocket and handing it to the boy.

"Thank you, sir," said Philippe. The boy smiled up at him as he took the mechanical pencil. It was a smile that stopped Kaplan's heart—a smile of intelligence and gratitude and natural sweetness. As the boy went back to his workbook, Kaplan wondered what he could do to make that smile reappear.

"Excuse my disturbing you," Kaplan said, touching the boy lightly on the arm, "but do you happen to have any interest in magic?"

The boy nodded yes. "Philippe adores magic," his mother said.

Kaplan took a quarter out of his pants pocket and performed a sleight-of-hand trick that called for the boy to guess in which hand the quarter ended up. Three times in a row the boy guessed the wrong hand. Kaplan next rolled a quarter across the knuckles on the back of his hand. Finally, he placed a quarter on the outer part of his forearm, just below the elbow, straightened his arm, and caught the quarter before it fell to the floor. The boy was dazzled.

"Would you by any chance be interested in learning any of these tricks?" Kaplan asked him.

"Very much," said the boy, in a voice of great earnestness. "I would love it."

As Kaplan explained the first trick, the boy's attention was complete. Kaplan held Philippe's small hand in his own, palm up, showing him how to conceal the quarter between and slightly underneath the middle and index fingers. Rolling the quarter across his knuckles the boy couldn't do. Kaplan assured him he would get the hang of it with practice. The quarter-below-the-elbow trick he got on the seventh or eighth try. His victory smile—a mixture of surprise and delight—blew Kaplan away.

"Philippe loves four things," his mother, leaning across her son's seat, said, "magic, soccer, his computer, and playing the trumpet." Just then the quarter got away from the boy, rolling along the floor out in the aisle of pedestrian traffic.

"He's a great kid," Kaplan said to the woman.

WHEN the plane was ready for boarding, Philippe held out the quarter to Kaplan. But Kaplan told him to keep it to practice with, and took another quarter out of his pocket, putting that into the boy's hand, too, just in case he lost the first one.

"Thank you for being so nice to my son," the woman said. As she walked away, Kaplan noted that her slip was showing beneath the back of her skirt and that the tennis shoes she wore—Nike's, the same brand as her son's—made her ankles look a bit thick. An old line from Kaplan's shoe-selling days on State Street popped into his head: "May I show you something in a nice pump, or maybe an evening shoe?" Now where the hell did that come from, he wondered.

It was a flight without first-class seats. Philippe and his mother must have been seated toward the middle of the plane. Kaplan was on the aisle near the front. He had intended to work on the flight, but the crowded plane and the darkened rainy sky caused him to forget about work. He tilted back his seat and soon was asleep, dreaming of being with Philippe at a Cubs game at Wrigley Field. In his dream it was a sunny day; they had very good seats, and Kaplan explained everything

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he knew about baseball to the formal little boy who had a French mother. A pop foul bounced off the roof of the Cubs' dugout and landed in Kaplan's hands. He could read the clear print on the ball, feel the texture of the red threads that held it together. Kaplan handed the baseball to Philippe, who for some reason was wearing his backpack and a down jacket, even though it was a warm day. "Thank you, father," the boy said, and leaned over in his seat to kiss Kaplan's cheek.

At LaGuardia, Kaplan, who deplaned before the boy and his mother, waited in the gate area, thinking he might offer them a ride into Manhattan in the limousine he had ordered. He hung back among people who were waiting for passengers on his flight, and then he saw them. He was about to wave when a tall man with a beard, wire-rimmed glasses, wearing jeans and a leather jacket with a fur collar called out, "Philippe, Phil, over here." The boy saw the man and ran to him. They hugged; the man lifted the boy up, a slight affront to his dignity, though he was clearly pleased to be held. This man, Kaplan decided, must be Philippe's father. From the fact that he shook hands rather coldly with Philippe's mother, Kaplan also decided that they must be divorced and that maybe she was bringing the boy to New York for a visit.

"THIS," said Kaplan to himself sitting behind the wheel of the rented Lincoln Town Car, "is crazy." He was parked on the 59th Street side of the University of Chicago Lab School, along the Midway. It was nearly three o'clock. He had been there since two-thirty, and to pass the time he had been counting beards on students and teachers on their way to and from the university campus; thirty-six had passed in less than half an hour. Kaplan was hoping to meet Philippe Glicksman. Kaplan's secretary had been able to find out that Glicksman was the boy's last name by calling the school; there weren't, after all, that many boys named Philippe. His secretary had also been able to discover that Philippe's mother's name was Françoise Berger, pronounced, like his old salesman Sy Bourget, without the last letter and with an accented *e*. Kaplan was right: there must have been a divorce, with Philippe retaining his father's name and his mother returning to her maiden name.

All of which was interesting but none of which explained what Sheldon Kaplan, former car dealer, venture capitalist, Jewish philanthropist, was doing sitting in a rented car on a gray Chicago day waiting for a third-grade boy whom he had met and talked with briefly in an airport two weeks ago. "This," Kaplan repeated to himself, "is crazy, nuts, completely *meshugah*."

And yet since meeting with the child, Kaplan couldn't get him out of his mind. If things had turned out differently, if he, Kaplan, had had a son, this boy, intelligent and handsome, a boyman really, earnest and well-mannered, was exactly what he would have wanted. Kaplan, not generally much given to daydreaming, now regularly found his mind wandering to various scenes featuring Philippe and himself: explaining the infield-fly rule to the boy; presenting him with his first car, a red convertible; driving him off to begin his freshman year at Harvard or maybe Stanford, some such joint; finally, taking him into the business. Kaplan found he liked to linger over these daydreams, to fill in the details, replay them before falling asleep at night in his suite at the Drake. Sheldon Kaplan, who all his life had traveled light and loose, wanting both nothing and for nothing, now wanted this boy for a son, wanted him more than he had ever wanted anything in his life, ached for the want of him.

As the kids began streaming from the school, Kaplan kept on the lookout. He finally spotted Philippe coming out of the entrance with a black kid who seemed to be a mulatto and was Philippe's size. Kaplan opened the heavy door of the Lincoln.

"Philippe," he called, the French pronunciation of the name sounding strange to him. Kaplan spoke no foreign languages, had in fact never been to Europe, and had no curiosity about it.

The boy saw Kaplan and walked over. He was in his down coat, wearing his backpack. He was carrying a musical-instrument case in his left hand. When Kaplan asked him if he remembered, he merely said, "Watch," and setting down his trumpet case, took a quarter from his pocket, placed it just below his elbow, and perfectly executed the trick Kaplan had taught him at the airport.

"That's terrific, Philippe, terrific," said Kaplan. "Did you have to practice long to master it?"

"Pretty long," the boy said, then remembered his friend. "Excuse me," he said to Kaplan "but I guess I don't even know your name." Told, he turned first to his friend, then back to Kaplan, and said, "Mr. Kaplan, may I present my friend Andrew Wilson?" Kaplan, charmed, shook the other boy's hand. He had seen nothing like such manners from any of the children of his friends, who were at best cute and at worst whiny or wild. But this Philippe was in another league, another class entirely.

Driving the boy home, Kaplan learned that his mother taught something called comparative literature at the University of Chicago and that his father, who lived in Manhattan, taught psychology at a place called Stony Brook on Long Island. Philippe and his mother lived on a dark block on Woodlawn Avenue between 53rd and 54th Streets, in a two-bedroom, third-floor apartment. The carpet in the hallway was worn, many of the doors had two and three locks. It was a building that had seen better days. Philippe had let himself in with his own key. Kaplan was carrying a large

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package under his arm. "*Maman,*" he called out, "I am home and I have Mr. Kaplan with me."

"And who is Mr. Kaplan?" Françoise Berger called out from the kitchen. When she came into the room in which Kaplan and her son were standing she was wearing jeans, the same tennis shoes she wore at the airport, and a sweatshirt with Mickey Mouse across the front. Recognizing Kaplan, she smiled and held out her hand. "So nice to see you again," she said in her French-accented English.

"Forgive this intrusion," Kaplan said, "but I saw something the other day at Marshall Field's that I thought your son might like, but I didn't want to give it to him without your permission. Is it all right?"

She looked dubiously at the large package wrapped in Field's dark green paper under his arm, but Kaplan, consummate salesman, knew she couldn't refuse, not with the boy in the room. "I'm sure it will be fine," she said, and Kaplan handed the package to Philippe.

It was a magic set, the best they had, costing $119. If there had been one for $3,000 that came with a girl to be sawed in half, Kaplan would have bought it. Philippe, on the floor tearing the paper from the box, was tremendously pleased. Inside were coins, rings, a collapsible top hat, a trick water glass, rubber rabbits, colored scarfs, two wands, a cape with secret pockets, a miniature guillotine, ropes, false-bottomed Chinese boxes, a pair of white gloves. The boy's eyes shone. With his extraordinary manner of shifting suddenly from child to grown-up, he got to his feet, extended his hand to Kaplan, and said, "I am very grateful for this generous gift. Thank you very much."

"If it makes you happy," said Kaplan, "then it makes me happy."

"It clearly does make Philippe happy," said his mother. "Perhaps, Mr. Kaplan, you will stay to have dinner with us?"

KAPLAN had in fact planned on being asked to stay to dinner. During the meal—omelettes, salad course served afterward, good bread, a white table wine (which the boy also drank, in a watered-down version), cheese and fruit and coffee—Kaplan gently pumped Françoise Berger for information. He learned that she had met her husband, Bernard Glicksman, a Jew like herself, during his Fulbright year in Rouen, where she was a student. They married not long afterward. She was his second wife; he was now on his third. She followed him back to the United States. While he taught at the University of Pennsylvania, she worked on a Ph.D. in comparative literature there. Philippe was born when she was twenty-nine; she was thirty-seven now, eighteen years younger than Kaplan. She received neither alimony nor child-support payments from her former husband, though he was supposed to be putting money away to pay for their son's college education. For the two of them, mother and son, living on her assistant-professor's salary was a tight stretch, but by being careful she was able to get by.

"But why do I tell you all these things?" she said "You are very easy to talk to. Now you must tell me something about yourself."

Kaplan didn't give away much. He told her that he was in business for himself. He said that he had never married and lived downtown. He said that he had lived all his life in Chicago. He said nothing about his current net worth being somewhere in the neighborhood of $60 million. He also neglected to mention to her that he intended to marry her because he wanted to help raise her son. Before the evening was over, she had accepted his invitation to dinner on the weekend and had agreed to call him Shelly, which in her French accent came out closer to "Jelly."

This was maybe the biggest deal of Kaplan's life and he felt it needed to be handled with the greatest care. He mustn't move too quickly—and yet not too slowly either. The pressure must be there, faintly, not oppressively, but quietly constant. Things were damned complicated, of course, by his not really knowing what Françoise Berger was like, which for him reduced itself to the question of what she wanted from life. With his salesmanly instincts, he would have to feel his way. These same instincts would tell him how and when to close.

He took her to dinner the following Saturday evening at the Cape Cod Room of the Drake Hotel, where he was well-known. The headwaiter, after seating them at a small table in the back near a window overlooking the Outer Drive, said, "The turbot is very fine tonight, Mr. Kaplan." Their waiter, a man named Mario who had worked at the restaurant for many years, made a great fuss, anticipating his preference in wine, soup, salad, potato.

"Do you come here often, Jelly?" Françoise asked.

"Actually," he said, "I live here, have for a number of years." Kaplan couldn't be sure if she found this information impressive or odd.

"It must be very costly. Are you a rich man, Jelly?"

"Next to some people, I am," he said. "Next to others, I'm a piker."

"Piker? What is a piker?" she asked, smiling. She was not beautiful, Kaplan thought, but she did have a fine smile. She was wearing a white silk blouse, not too carefully pressed, under a red cardigan sweater with a black skirt. Coming into the restaurant, walking behind her to their table, he noticed that she had a run in her stocking. "Academic chic," he thought to himself at the time.

After explaining what a piker was, he made a mental note to be more careful with his language

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around her. During dinner, he used the old salesman's trick of asking questions and letting the customer do all the talking. He asked her about her work at the university, and understood practically nothing of what she told him—many names were mentioned he had never heard of, several words ending in "ism" were equally lost on him—though he kept his gaze steady, nodded regularly, and from time to time murmured, "Interesting."

Then Kaplan asked Françoise about Philippe. He seemed a happy child. Was he? Did he see his father often? Was the divorce hard on the boy? What did he think he wanted to do when he was older? But Kaplan sensed that he must not show too much interest in the kid. It was the mother he was supposed to be chiefly absorbed in.

After dinner, they crossed the street to the lobby of the Knickerbocker Hotel to have a drink and listen to a pianist play and sing Gershwin, Cole Porter, and Rodgers and Hart. At about eleven-thirty, Kaplan took Françoise back to Hyde Park in a cab. At her door, she said she had enjoyed herself. He suggested he might call her during the week. He knew the man who owned the Chicago indoor soccer team; if they were in town, maybe he could get tickets to take her and Philippe to see a game, if she thought the boy would enjoy it. "I am sure he would, Jelly," she said, and kissed him lightly on the cheek before turning and closing the door behind her.

Over the next month, Kaplan put what he thought of as a three-quarter court press on Françoise. He saw her and the boy not every evening, but usually at least twice a week. He took them to the theater and to movies and once to the Chicago Symphony, where he struggled—and failed—to stay awake. They always had the best seats and, at restaurants, the best tables. On a Saturday afternoon, he took Philippe alone to Wrigley Field, where he had tickets in the first row behind the Cubs dugout and through a connection was able to get the boy a ball signed by all the players. Living alone with a European mother in the setting of the University of Chicago, Philippe knew next to nothing about baseball, or about any of the other American sports. Kaplan hoped one day to rectify that.

The first night Kaplan and Françoise slept together it was her idea. Kaplan wasn't pushing it. They were to go to a movie, and when he arrived at the Woodlawn Avenue apartment she told him she had arranged for Philippe to spend the night at the home of one of his classmates. Kaplan felt slightly odd making love in a small bedroom with prints of abstract art on the walls and filled with paperback books in foreign languages. He was also used to women rather more accomplished in these matters, who tended to organize activities around his not their pleasure. (Cut it any way you like, it was he who finally picked up all the tabs.) It was otherwise with Françoise. Adjustments would have to be made.

The following Saturday night Kaplan accompanied Françoise to a party given by one of the senior professors in her department. Everyone there was connected with the university. He was worried beforehand that he would have nothing to say to such people, nor they to him, and he turned out to be right. Twenty or so people were in the living room of the book-lined apartment. Many beards in the room; also much baldness. ("I know," Kaplan could hear his friend Morty Siegel's jokey reply, "and the men were even homelier.") Kaplan was no beauty himself, but he had never seen so strong an air of confidence among people who seemed, somehow, slightly deformed. The women seemed dimmer and more disheveled than the men. Most were married couples, and in order for them to have come together, Kaplan imagined, they must have arrived at some mutual agreement to overestimate each other.

Their host, who greeted them at the door, was a large man, red-faced, with an aggressive white beard. He clearly never caught Kaplan's name when Françoise introduced him. Seated on a couch near the fireplace, a short man, bald, with long grizzly white sideburns, wearing a rumpled tweed jacket, mud-spattered shoes, and a turtleneck sweater that looked as if it weighed eighteen or twenty pounds was holding forth with great animation in a heavy German accent. A squat man with a red goatee and a hairdo intended to disguise his baldness, which it only accentuated, seemed bored almost to anger by the German's performance. These were all teachers, Kaplan reminded himself, more accustomed to talking than to listening, and there was, it seemed to him, a lot more talking than listening going on in the room. When their host, the guy in the fierce white beard, brought them their drinks he asked Kaplan what he did, and after Kaplan said that he was in business, he never asked him in what business. Instead he turned to Françoise and began what sounded to Kaplan like a lecture on the subject of a writer with a strongly foreign name.

Kaplan found himself with a glass of white wine in his hand on a couch next to a woman with large earrings who was smoking a cigarette and who began talking to him about her strong desire to stop smoking. She went on and on about it; obviously it was one of her great subjects. Kaplan, the old salesman, put himself on automatic pilot, pretending to listen while looking around the room. None of the men had shoeshines; all of the women wore glasses. No one in this room, he imagined, had been much of an athlete or dancer when a kid, or had trouble with the IRS, or was likely ever to call him to ask if he could get them tickets to a Bears game. No, this was not his room.

Françoise, however, seemed happy enough here. The scruffy German had captured her and another

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woman and had begun yet another lecture. Some day, if she played her cards right, she would be able to deliver the lectures at such parties. This, in any case, was her scene; Kaplan could at least sense that much, and in doing so he also sensed how unlikely it was that he would ever feel comfortable among these people. Not that he was much for social life—his closest friends were still those fellows he went to high school with and who were now lawyers or dentists or accountants or ran small businesses. As a bachelor, he was not a regular part of their crowd and only saw them and their wives on the occasion of their children's weddings or a twenty-fifth anniversary party or at the funerals of their parents. The women in this circle talked about travel and clothes and their children (now grandchildren) and dieting, lots about dieting. Françoise would have felt just as awkward among them as he was in her circle. Not that he felt all that comfortable in either place. French writers or Italian designers, it was all pretty much the same to him.

"Jelly," Françoise said, in the car on the way back to her apartment, "I hope that the evening was not too terrible for you."

"Not at all," he lied, "it was very interesting. Some very intelligent people were in that room. An impressive group. Only I was thinking about Philippe."

"What about him?"

"I was thinking maybe it would be healthier if he grew up in a more normal setting."

"Healthier and more normal? What can that mean, Jelly?"

Kaplan's salesman's antennae warned him that he was in dangerous waters and to proceed cautiously. "I guess I really meant 'more regular,'" he said. "By which I mean more in the workaday world, where fathers go off to regular jobs, most mothers stay home to look after their children, and not everything is intellectualized and talked to death."

"I see," Françoise said, "such as you find in your own healthy and normal neighborhood on the twelfth floor of the Drake Hotel."

Kaplan had not expected that arrow in his forehead. "The Drake Hotel and the University of Chicago aren't the only alternatives, Françoise," he shot back. "There are suburbs, nice neighborhoods in the city. If Philippe were my son, I would find a place for him to grow up in a more ordinary way. The boy is extraordinary enough in his own right."

"But he is not your son, Jelly. So why do you worry so about him? Sometimes I think you think more about Philippe than you do about me."

"I care about you both," Kaplan replied, rather unconvincingly he thought.

No more was said, and when Kaplan drove up in front of Françoise's apartment, she told him not to bother parking. She was tired and preferred to go directly to bed.

Kaplan realized that he had made a serious mistake. He had told a divorced woman that she was raising her child badly. Dumb. And, besides, not even true in Françoise's case, for she was careful and completely responsible about everything having to do with her son. What was true was that he, Kaplan, wished the boy to have a more American upbringing. At the Cubs game, for example, he discovered that Philippe didn't know what he wanted on his hot dog because he had never had a hot dog before. Kaplan found that astonishing. The kid never used slang, for the good reason that he knew none. Everyone, even his classmates, called him by his full name, Philippe, never Phil or any nickname. It was as if the boy were being raised in another country.

Nor, even though both his parents were Jews, was there anything especially Jewish about him. Bernie Glicksman, the boy's father, had been brought up in New York in something called Ethical Culture, which, as Françoise once explained, attempted to instill the ideas of religion without allowing God into the discussion. As for Françoise, her parents, both of whom died in their fifties, thought themselves much more French than Jewish, and never got over their shock at having to escape to Switzerland (money easing the way) when the Nazis occupied France. So Philippe grew up with a Jewish name and a Jewish face but nothing else. Kaplan was very far from an observant Jew himself, but one of his recurring daydreams was standing behind Philippe on the altar stage at Temple Shalom on Lake Shore Drive at the boy's bar mitzvah.

Kaplan's stock of daydreams seemed to increase, and he enjoyed plugging them in, like cassettes, when he had a free moment: him and Philippe at a Bulls game (Kaplan had done business with the owner of the Bulls, a real-estate operator named Reinsdorf). Taking Philippe shopping for school clothes. Fishing with Philippe in hip boots in a mountain stream in Canada (Kaplan had never fished in his life). Driving the boy around Chicago, showing him the neighborhood he grew up in, taking him to the restaurants he liked, instructing him in the dangers and pleasures awaiting a young man of adventurous spirit in a modern big city. Kaplan sometimes wondered what, apart from business deals, he had thought about before meeting this boy.

KAPLAN figured that maybe the bad effects of his last meeting with Françoise had worn off. The three of them had eaten an Italian dinner on Taylor Street, and gone to see *The Last Emperor,* toward the end of which Philippe fell asleep. He was in his bed now. Françoise and Kaplan were in the small living room of her apartment, and he was about to leave when she said, "Jelly, I should like it if you would please read the story I have marked in this book and the whole of this novel."

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Kaplan took the two paperback books she handed him, and he sat up late that night reading, with some difficulty, the story "Death in Venice." The novel, *Lolita*, he couldn't get through, but felt he didn't have to. He got the point. Fortunately, he planned to be in Boca Raton for five days next week and wouldn't see Françoise till the weekend. It would give him time to think things through.

In Florida, Kaplan felt he had botched things badly. In a business deal, he would have been much sharper. In business, his mind searched for the other party's desires, and hence his weaknesses, and once he knew those he knew how to play the game. Tax questions his accountants handled; loopholes his lawyers closed up. Kaplan alone knew the stakes, was aware of the higher plan; his specialty was minimizing risk while maximizing potential gain. Keep your head clear and your heart out of it and nine times out of ten you win. But with Françoise and Philippe, he was the one with the desire, and hence the weakness; his heart, far from being out of it, was thoroughly engaged. So much so that he failed to ask the most fundamental questions: why should Françoise want him? He would be getting a son out of the deal. What would she be getting? A very rich husband, yet she seemed unimpressed, almost completely uninterested in Kaplan's money. (He had developed a very good nose for people who were interested in it.)

Kaplan had not pursued her ardently enough. He had let his love of her son show through too clearly. Why else had she given him that story and that novel? Did she actually suspect him of being some kind of pervert: Gustave Humbert von Kaplan? He wouldn't put it past her. From his admittedly limited experience, Kaplan knew that nothing was quite real to an intellectual, a person who lived so completely in her mind as Françoise, that she could not relate to a book. Kaplan's problem was now to convince her otherwise.

But the larger problem was to convince her that his feelings were genuine. Successful salesmen, Kaplan knew, always sold themselves first. Could Kaplan sell himself on this young French academic woman? She was not beautiful, at least not by the standards he used, though she had a good smile and a certain natural refinement, which was partially what attracted him to her son, who must have got it from his mother. She was obviously intelligent—a high IQ type—but hers was not an intelligence that was much stimulated by the reality of everyday life. Kaplan recalled one evening explaining to her the subtleties of purchasing political influence in the city of Chicago, but the subject seemed to leave her bored. He would never be able to discuss the books that interested her, nor she the deals that interested him. Her friends were not his idea of a swell bunch—he hoped to God Philippe would never turn out to be like them—and his friends would no doubt leave her equally cold. Such thinking yielded quite a balance sheet: all debits.

On the credit side was the large item of love for Philippe. This they both had in common. Kaplan had no doubts about the genuineness of his feeling for the boy; Françoise, of course, had proved hers—proved it every day. There was something very impressive about a woman trying to raise a boy on her own. When Kaplan thought about Françoise, a foreigner alone in the world but for her son, he was moved, his heart was touched, he could forgive her everything. She might be a little screwy—imagine giving him those books to read—with poor taste in people and not very good instincts about what was real and what wasn't. But all that disappeared when placed next to her devotion to Philippe. When he saw this in action—when she put food before the boy, or tucked in the shirt that sometimes came out of his pants, or inquired if he had brushed his teeth before he went off to bed—at such moments, yes, Kaplan loved her.

Coming out of the Drake on the Drive side that Saturday morning, Kaplan greeted Julius, the black doorman on the day shift, and stepped into the large Winnebago camper he had rented for the weekend. He had promised to take Philippe and his friend Andrew camping in Kenosha, Wisconsin. The man from the rental agency showed Kaplan how to hook up the water and the portable gas tank, which supplied the energy for the two-burner range and the hot-water heater. A television set and refrigerator were also included. The camper slept four. Kaplan arranged to have it stocked with groceries. The rental for two days, insurance included, came to a little more than six hundred bucks. A case-hardened city type, Kaplan knew diddly about camping, the country, or the outdoors generally. If he hadn't thought that it would rob some of the fun of the weekend, Kaplan would have hired a driver and a chef to come along. As it was, he had to buy some tan pants, a couple of golf shirts, a windbreaker, and tennis shoes for the outing. All he owned was business clothes.

Françoise and the two boys boarded the camper on Woodlawn Avenue, she carrying a small suitcase with clothes for the weekend. The boys were excited by the gadgetry and plushness of the camper's interior.

"It's really splendid, isn't it, Mr. Kaplan?" said Philippe, in his oddly stiff adult manner. He always referred to Kaplan as "Mr. Kaplan," a slightly awkward situation for which Kaplan had no good remedy. It seemed wrong for the boy to call him by his first name, and wrong, too, to suggest "Uncle Sheldon." He himself would have like to call the boy "Phil," or to find some winning nickname for him. For now, though, they remained "Mr. Kaplan" and "Philippe."

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"Neat wheels, man," said Andrew, cutting through complications. Maybe, thought Kaplan, he ought to pursue Andrew's mother. It would be a hell of a lot simpler.

While the boys roamed around in the back of the Winnebago, Françoise sat up front next to Kaplan. They scarcely spoke, for driving this machine was like driving a truck and took most of Kaplan's concentration. He had to laugh to himself—here he was, the man who organized his life to travel light and unencumbered, maneuvering this buslike vehicle whose cargo included a French woman and two young boys, off to spend a weekend doing nothing he particularly cared to do. Life had its little surprises, no doubt about it.

It was only when they arrived at the camp grounds and Kaplan, with a good deal of confusion, hooked up the water and electricity and the boys went off to inspect the large park nearby that they had a chance to talk. They were sitting on red canvas directors' chairs by the side of the camper.

"It is very kind of you, Jelly," she said, "to go to all this trouble and expense for us in this way."

"I have a motive. It's that it really pleases me to see your son happy. But speaking of kindness, it wasn't, you know, very kind of you to give me those stories to read. What was your motive there?"

"Mixed motives, I suppose," she said. "I felt—I still feel—that your affection for my son is, well, it is unusual. And perhaps I feel, too, a bit jealous, thinking that you care more for Philippe than you do for me. I know you have tried to hide this, but it comes through nevertheless. Perhaps in giving you those books to read I was striking out a little at you."

"You say my feeling for Philippe is unusual, but do you really mean 'unnatural,' like in those stories?"

"I am not sure what I think, Jelly."

"Well, let me clear things up for you. I love your son. I loved him when I first saw him. And everything I now know about him causes me to love him more. I love him for himself and I love him for myself, for purely selfish reasons. I love him because I think I can be useful to him, both with my money and with what I know about life. What I know about life is very different from what you know. Naturally, I tend to think what I know may be more important. Maybe it is; maybe not. But with what we know together we can do a lot for him. You, I realize, already have done a lot for him—make that *everything* for him. But I think I can help out, and I want to. For him and for you and for myself. It would make me feel that my life was a little more worthwhile, that it made a little more sense."

"And where do I fit in all this?"

"You are the boy's mother, and though maybe you don't think about it in the way I do, in my view he is a great achievement, one that does you real honor. Raising this boy by yourself alone from the age of three took guts, and raising him to be so kind-hearted and likable a kid took character. I didn't realize it at first, but in fact I love you for what you have done for your child. It may not be the thing you want most to be loved for, but it seems to me that it's every bit as legitimate as loving someone for her mind or her looks or stylishness—at my age, and from my point of view, it seems to me even more legitimate."

Listening to himself, in the way all good salesman train themselves to do, Kaplan sensed that he was doing well (he wasn't sure that he was really even selling), that he was convincing, that he was on a roll, that he was—as how many hundreds of times in the past—closing.

But just then Philippe and Andrew returned, said they were starved, and conversation came to an end as Françoise began preparations for lunch. The discussion was never picked up, and the weekend went by in a blur. The boys seemed to be having a great time. Saturday afternoon they rented a boat and tackle, and all four fished, catching a large number of small rock bass which, against Andrew's protests, they threw back. That night they cooked hot dogs and hamburgers on a portable barbeque and walked into town to see a movie. They slept in the four fold-out beds in the Winnebago.

Out for a walk early Sunday morning, Kaplan noticed a riding stable nearby, and when he returned to the camper asked if anyone cared to join him for a ride. Françoise declined. Andrew begged off, saying that he didn't like horses close up. If Philippe was also afraid, he pretended not to be, and after breakfast he and Kaplan walked off to the stable together.

It was Philippe's first time on a horse. Kaplan had not ridden since summer camp in Eagle River, Wisconsin, as a thirteen-year-old. Philippe looked small and brave sitting upon the large horse, his hands stiffly gripping the reins. Kaplan told him he was doing fine and that he would be with him all the way. At a narrow place on the bridle path, Philippe's horse walked in front, seeming especially huge under so light a cargo. When the path widened, Kaplan rode up alongside Philippe and asked him how he felt about trotting a little. The boy gulped and said yes, he would like to try. The two of them trotted along side by side for a hundred yards or so, until Kaplan grabbed the reins of the boy's horse to bring him to a stop. Philippe was breathless and his face was flushed and he began to laugh.

"That was wonderful," he said.

"I thought so, too," Kaplan said. "We'll let the horses rest a moment and then we'll try it again."

And they did. And then, after another while, they did it again and then again and again. Alone on the bridle path, just the two of them, Kaplan

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listened to the boy's laughter ring out, light and silvery, above the trees.

After they had returned the horses to the stable, Philippe said, "I loved that, Mr. Kaplan. May we do it again some day?"

"Of course we can," Kaplan said. "And by the way, we ought to find something for you to call me besides 'Mr. Kaplan.'"

"What?"

"How about 'Jelly,' like your mother calls me? And what about if I call you, instead of Philippe, which is a bit formal, what if I call you Jam? Then we could be Jelly and Jam."

The boy's small serious face broke into wrinkles as he giggled. Jelly and Jam, they walked down the side of the road back to the camper and along the way the boy slipped his hand into Kaplan's. Squeezing lightly, the ace salesman, multimillionaire, venture capitalist felt his heart melt.

After an early evening dinner of steaks and potatoes cooked on the grill and a salad, Françoise loaded up the Winnebago, Kaplan disconnected the water hook-up, and they drove home to Chicago. On the way home, Kaplan quizzed the boys about the names of the capitals of the states and taught them to sing "A Hundred Bottles of Beer on the Wall." It was ten o'clock when they dropped off Andrew at his mother's apartment. Philippe was asleep when they pulled up before Françoise's apartment, and Kaplan carried him up the three flights of stairs.

"It has been a lovely weekend, Jelly," said Françoise, "thank you so very much."

"I have to be in New York for a few days on business," he said, "but I'll call you when I get back."

At the Drake he turned the camper over to the night doorman, to whom he slipped two twenties to make sure it was returned the next morning. Undressing in his suite, he felt it had been a fine, successful weekend, and fell asleep thinking of himself as husband and father, Sheldon Kaplan, family man.

When he returned from New York, at nine o'clock on a rainy Wednesday night, there was a letter from Françoise at his hotel. It was on University of Chicago stationery and was typed. It was the first written communication he had had from her, and he found it a bit strange to be addressed by her as "Dear Shelly" instead of as "Jelly." The letter got right down to business.

"I'm writing this letter at eleven o'clock on Sunday night, after our lovely weekend in Wisconsin. Philippe is now in his pajamas, asleep, and it has been a little less than an hour since you left here to return to your hotel. Philippe and his friend Andrew enjoyed themselves immensely and I did, too, though I have been able to think about little else than the points you raised in our interrupted conversation on Saturday morning. Before I go on to say what I feel I must say, I want you to know how honored I am by your regard for my son—honored and pleased that a man of your experience thinks my little boy so extraordinary."

Kaplan didn't like the sound of that last sentence. To the eye and ear of the experienced salesman, it had the ring of Thanks But or No Sale about it. The letter continued:

"I am also honored by what you said about your feelings for me developing out of your admiration for the way I have raised Philippe. At a time when everyone is so nervous about whether or not she is doing the right things for her children, it is very good to be told that one is not the failure one is almost certain one is. And, if it is not vain of me to say so, I think your are correct when you say that it is better to be loved for having raised a child well than for having written a fine book or for just about any other reason. You put that very well on Saturday morning, I thought, and it reminded me how clear-minded and penetrating you can be.

"And how persuasive, too. Without setting it out in detail, you have made plain how much you could do for my son, both through worldly experience and through your wealth. I may be an academic woman, with what seems to you her head in the clouds, but I am also French and middle-class and therefore not without respect for money and what it can do. Although I have never spoken to you about it, I have been living with an almost continual anxiety about money since my divorce. How splendid it would be, married to you, simply never to have to worry ever again for the rest of my life about rent and clothes and dental bills and dozens of other things! To have all that settled and solved and out of my mind would be a great luxury in itself."

Kaplan didn't like those "woulds"; they made him very edgy.

"Being married to you would give my son a father he could admire and whose love for him isn't in doubt. Financially, it would make possible for Philippe many advantages he does not now posssess. As for me, marriage would end my loneliness, which, despite the busyness of trying to manage a career and raise a son, has at times been considerable. We have little in the way of common interests, I realize; in fact, I know almost nothing about what it is you do. But I admire the mastery you seem to have attained in your own world. It seems to me manly and impressive, and it is something that I should like Philippe, whatever he does later in his life, to appreciate and emulate."

Still alive? Kaplan wondered. Maybe not yet knocked out of the box?

"I suspect you do not credit me with an overdeveloped sense of reality, but about my own life and that of my son I try to make as few mistakes as possible. I have already made one mistake in

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marriage and I do not wish to make another, which, as I approach forty, could be my last. So much about us makes me nervous: we come from very different worlds, live in very different worlds, have very different views about what matters in the world. What we share is love for Philippe. And even here I wish things were otherwise. I wish that you had discovered my son through me rather than the other way around. A question you have to ask yourself—it is a question I have been asking myself for a while now—is, would you have cared at all for me if I had not been the mother of Philippe? If there had been no Philippe, would you have attempted to see me again? I do not like to think about the answers to those questions."

Kaplan, setting down the letter, didn't in the least mind thinking about them. The answer to both was no. But he considered them both purely theoretical—she was the boy's mother, through the boy he learned of her quality—and Kaplan had little interest in theoretical questions. Life in practice offered complications enough.

Two lengthy single-spaced paragraphs followed, expressing doubts, hesitations, fears. Kaplan read with impatience, skimming over the paragraphs as he might over the boiler-plate language in a legal contract. He skipped down to the final paragraph.

"If your feeling for me comes through your admiration for my love for Philippe, then you should know that much of my feeling for you is also in good part owing to your love for him. In a way, we are both putting a lot of pressure on a little boy, making him responsible for the love between two adults. Philippe, you should know, adores you, but then he has chiefly known you as someone who has brought him gifts, taken him places, made life more exciting for him. I wish he could know you in a more everyday way—see you angry or bored or depressed. I would myself like to see you in these states. (I assume you lapse into them, like the rest of us.) If I were not so thoroughly bourgeois a woman, I would suggest that we live together, but, however useful that might be for us, I do not think our doing so would be the best thing for Philippe. So instead I propose that, before we do anything final, we put each other on a year's trial: that we take a full year to see how we truly feel about each other and how Philippe feels about us as a couple. I hope you will agree that this makes good sense. But we can talk about all this—and much more—when you return from New York." She signed the letter, "With love."

Kaplan took the No Sale sign down in his mind. He had apparently closed again—though for a brief moment he wondered just who was closing whom. He realized, too, that once married, he would have to live with more clutter and less freedom in his life. A flash of doubt intruded on his triumph. But then he remembered that he would now be on hand as Philippe grew up, he would live with an interesting woman whose intelligence he had underestimated, he would not die alone, he would not be entirely forgetten after he was gone. Could a man ask for more? Well, thought Kaplan, maybe a little more, and he began to plan how he could sell Françoise on reducing the year's trial to six months, settling and finally closing out the deal, his instincts told him, at not more than eight months, tops.

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Where Philosophy Matters

Josiah Lee Auspitz

Though our academic nomenclature preserves a view of higher education as grounded in philosophy, and of the university itself as a community of "doctors of philosophy," rarely does a spirit of philosophical inquiry take possession of an actual institution; more rarely still is a devotion to the unity of inquiry made explicit in the cultivation of philosophy itself. Yet now in Poland, for reasons deeply rooted in its culture, its history, its destitution, and its aspirations, philosophical study occupies an unusually honored place. Despite the difficult conditions in the country for any kind of intellectual work—shortages of ballpoint pens and paper, as well as the more advanced office, computing, and research facilities; lack of books and journals; the familiar Eastern European bureaucratic problems; and the sheer wear-and-tear of everyday living on an academic salary of $20-30 a month—anyone engaged in philosophy there, as I was for two extended visits, finds in Poland rare satisfactions.

There is, to begin with, an impressively large community of philosophers (as teachers and scholars of the subject are also called), spanning all the contemporary schools and in close touch with one another. In Warsaw, for example, the department at the university has more than sixty full-time members—more than Harvard, Yale, and Princeton combined and, I should guess, second in Europe only to the total employed by the several Oxford colleges. Across the street is the main headquarters of the 180-member Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, where specialists relieved of teaching duties are organized into departments of aesthetics, ethics, logic, history of philosophy, theory of knowledge, social theory, and the distinctively Polish field of praxiology. Elsewhere in Warsaw, at the government-sanctioned school of theology, at the schools of agriculture, central planning and statistics, medicine, and indeed at every school of higher and technical education, are additional departments of philosophy and logic. The cities of Cracow, Lodz, and Lublin have similar, though somewhat smaller, concentrations, each with its distinctive character.

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There is an administrative reason for the large numbers: a year's course in philosophy is required of every Polish student above the level of secondary school. This assures a demand for teaching positions rivaled in Europe only in Norway, where a similar requirement has the same effect. Thanks to a 1981 reform, the much-despised course in Problems of Marxism-Leninism has been replaced by the genuinely popular History of Philosophy, taught in small classes adapted to the various non-philosophical fields: for sociologists, the emphasis is on theory of knowledge and method, for mathematicians on logic, for students of literature on aesthetics, and so on. In most faculties, the teaching of introductory philosophy has reverted to the old Polish tradition of presenting all major currents of Western thought.

But the administrative dimension reflects something deeper: the cultural importance attached to philosophy (as also to poetry) in all intellectual quarters. Because the expression of Polish nationality has for so much of the past two centuries been confined to language, the most purely verbal disciplines have acquired especially high prestige. At universities, "doctor of philosophy" still has living force. Topics which are elsewhere the province of other departments—scientific method; comparative religion; history of ideas; semiotics; legal, political, and management theory; and the more speculative branches of psychology, anthropology, and economics—are in Poland often treated as branches of philosophical study. As a scientist who heads a leading university put it to me, "Here all of us are to some degree philosophers."

Outside the universities, the level of philosophical literacy is also high. Philosophical books are nonfiction best-sellers in all four tracks of the Polish-language publishing industry—governmental, Catholic, underground, and émigré. A new fifth track, the above-ground commercial press, provides a market-oriented indication: expecting a brisk sale, the leading publisher has planned a 50,000-copy run of Leszek Kolakowski's *Metaphysical Horror*, and editions of 10,000 to 20,000 for books by Hannah Arendt, Michael Oakeshott, Leo Strauss, and Eric Voegelin. In used bookstores the philosophy shelf is usually the barest, since all but the Marxist titles are quickly snapped up.

One frequently meets physicians, architects,

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lawyers, and engineers who continue to wrestle with the philosophical problems to which they were introduced at university. Fiction, drama, and poetry on explicitly philosophical themes, conceptual art and sculpture, a theoretical sophistication about the otherwise intractable political and economic issues—all give a decidedly reflective cast to the Polish intellectual scene. A cloakroom attendant, on seeing a philosophy title in my pocket, expressed a widespread view: "Some people say that mathematics is the queen of the sciences, but actually it is philosophy, since philosophy includes the human sciences as well." If one may speak of national intellectual traits, the Poles crave clarity about fundamental ideas and ideals.

THE conduct of academic philosophy reflects the seriousness accorded the subject. The lowest philosophy degree requires five years of study, which may be taken fresh out of secondary school or after a first university degree in another subject. A philosophical seminar typically includes both first-time and second-time undergraduates, as well as faculty of all ranks. It is considered a mark of respect for professors to attend each other's seminars and to enter into rough-and-tumble discussion. The Polish style is to voice criticisms directly and strongly, yet with a remarkable absence of captiousness.

Roman Ingarden, whose followers and admirers dominate the intellectual life of Cracow, captured the basis of the ideal philosophical seminar in an essay on "Fruitful Discussion." Ingarden was a student of Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), the founding figure of the phenomenological movement; he conducted an underground seminar during the Nazi occupation, and was deprived of teaching positions during the Stalinist period. Ingarden's experiences led him to draw a distinction between freedom of speech and freedom of discussion. While freedom of speech rests on political guarantees, freedom of discussion has purely internal requirements: the willingness to learn another person's language and to enter into his way of thinking. Even when free speech is written into law, freedom of discussion will remain inaccessible to the self-absorbed; yet the freedom to discuss, since it rests on self-knowledge and self-command, can be preserved even in a regime inhospitable to freedom of speech.

In Polish philosophy today, ordinary departmental meetings are often venues for discussion in Ingarden's sense. It is a point of honor that the main business of the faculty meeting, after the administrative matters are hurriedly covered, should be intellectual—a lecture, a series of short reports on work in progress, or the reading aloud and discussion of a text, sentence by sentence. Fundamental disagreements are put forth with a civility reinforced by the housing shortage: with a waiting time of twenty years for an apartment, there is no chance of driving one's opponents to a different university.

POLAND has in this century developed four distinct schools of philosophy: neo-Thomist, Marxist, phenomenological, and logical/analytic. Cracow is the capital for phenomenology, Warsaw for the more analytic approach, the Catholic University in Lublin for neo-Thomism, while Lodz, a secondary capital to Warsaw, houses the logic department of the Polish Academy of Sciences and the international journal *Studia Logica*. Orthodox Marxism-Leninism has no center; it is brain dead in Poland. Though there remain talented writers with Marxist tendencies in Warsaw and two or three of the provincial universities, the prevailing intellectual climate is dogmatically anti-Communist. Urbane and open-minded in most other respects, the Polish philosophical community judges Marxism narrowly, by its material fruits.

Various universities are known for special fields not offered elsewhere: logical semiotics in Warsaw, mathematical grammars at Mickiewicz University in Poznan, pragmatics at the Silesian University in Katowice and the Sklodowska-Curie University in Lublin, and in a recent development, Buddhist thought at Jagiellonian University in Cracow. And as always in the republic of letters, a single gifted writer or an eloquent teacher has more influence than can be surmised from course offerings or departmental statistics. Nothing in Polish intellectual life follows easy stereotypes: work in the philosophy of science is especially strong at the Pontifical Theological Academy, the Jewish philosophy of dialogue at the Jesuit College, and the Marxist philosophy of technology in Katowice, a city famed for industrial pollution and soaring rates of cancer and mental retardation.

Several Poles resident abroad have figured prominently in the country's intellectual dialogue: notably, Adam Schaff (Vienna); Leszek Kolakowski (Oxford and Chicago); and Karol Wojtyla (Rome). Since all three are known in the West, accounts of receptions accorded their work in Poland may give a flavor of the variety and intensity of thought there. And since none of these celebrated figures comes from the famous Lwow-Warsaw school, I shall offer a fourth vignette of professors trained in the Polish logical tradition.

ADAM SCHAFF, a leading Marxist theoretician, was once a member of the central committee of the Communist party and director of the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the Polish Academy of Sciences. Expelled from the party after nearly fifty years of membership in 1980, he now works in Vienna but came to Poland twice in 1988 to air his heterodox views. In May of last year he gave an address on "The Future of Socialism." His topic, widely considered a piece of black humor among students, drew so small an audience that the talk had to be moved from the largest lecture hall in the philosophy building to an ordinary classroom.

Schaff reminded his thirty listeners that socialism, according to Marx, had a scientific basis. It

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therefore had to change as historical conditions required. The new realities were fourfold:

First, the proletariat was not a revolutionary class; indeed, it was not a class at all, merely a congeries of redundant workers. Structural unemployment was now 30 million in the OECD countries, 19 million in the USSR, two million in Poland. It was particularly hard on the young, who were being systematically trained for obsolescent jobs. The world was in a second industrial revolution based on information technology and requiring a redefinition of socialism.

Second, the Communist movement was dead. Communist parties were now losing members in a trend that was irreversible, since the Marxist-Leninist devotion to democratic centralism was incompatible with the worldwide demand for democratization. True, Stalin had been mad, mentally ill; the problem, however, was not in him, but in the system. "We shall also see the day when Lenin is criticized."

Third, the wave of the future was democratic socialism, since it alone could solve the distribution problem of modern societies: how to apportion wealth among the citizenry without depending on the vagaries of the price system. The second industrial revolution would require a new division of the loaf of bread that only socialism could provide. This, Schaff concluded, was now widely accepted in the West: even Milton Friedman had propounded a negative income tax as early as 1963, an acceptance of the socialist premise that human welfare superseded market considerations.

Fourth, socialism had to break its "dogmatic reliance on atheism." The view of religion as the opiate of the people, true in the 19th century, was now out of date. Today's true revolutionists, Schaff said, were the activist priests and liberation theologians of Latin America. And he noted that in the Polish Community party, where mass resignations after 1981 might be thought to have purified the ranks, the percentage of believers was well over 70 percent, not strikingly lower than the 90 percent in the overall population.

In the same May lecture Schaff complained that his views, though translated in China, could not be published in Poland. But by autumn the climate of censorship had shifted so far that he was broadcasting them on state radio and television.

Leszek Kolakowski emigrated from Poland after losing his Warsaw University post in the history of philosophy in 1968. Yet he remains, as the titles of two recent Polish *Festschriften* honoring his sixtieth birthday proclaim, a "presence" in his native land. His three-volume critique of Marxist thought, by exposing in detail its character as an anti-philosophy, is more responsible than any single agency save the economy for the demise of Marxism as a respectable theoretical discipline in Poland.

In the winter of 1987, when Kolakowski's book on the philosophy of religion became available in illegal Polish editions, the Warsaw branch of the Polish Philosophical Association announced that its monthly meeting would be devoted to a critical discussion of this work. The meeting, scheduled for a seminar room, had to be moved to the large hall from which Adam Schaff was later to beat a retreat.

Two critical papers were read. They pulled no punches. One reviewed Kolakowski's odyssey from his early Marxism and underlined, as analytic philosophy is wont to do, his reversals on fundamental issues. The other argued that, to the contrary, Kolakowski's work has a unifying thread: a streak of historicism that disqualifies him from understanding the religious mind, and also, it was alleged, the purely logical aspects of philosophy and science.

After a break for puffing upon strong tobacco, some 200 members of the audience returned for two hours of further discussion. Eminent professors rose to deliver their opinions in the forthright Polish manner, often coming to the blackboard to illustrate points in symbolic notation. In Kolakowski's defense, a fitting distinction was made between a philosopher's philosopher, who bides his time until he can say something that will last, and a European intellectual in the tradition of the *philosophes*, whose excellence is to be found in the vigor and profundity of his encounters with the main ideas of his time.*

If, even in his absence, Kolakowski's work had become an occasion for "fruitful discussion" in Warsaw, in Cracow the same Kolakowski book sparked an equally characteristic gathering. Cracow, though second to Warsaw in the number of its philosophers, may well be the first in the world in the centrality of philosophy to the life of the town. As the political capital, Warsaw has many competing activities. Cracow, on the other hand, is preeminently a university town; of its 700,00 inhabitants, 60,000 are said to be full-time students in higher education, including many in Catholic seminaries. With the bulk of the working population concentrated in the newer industrial districts, the intelligentsia dominates the historic core of the city. The Jagiellonian University, Poland's oldest, bears the motto, "*Plus Ratio Quam Vis*," which captures the devotion to reason over power that Cracow sees as its distinguishing trait.

Cracow is particularly avid for discussions of the philosophical aspects of religion, or for topics which have both a speculative and ethical content. No surprise, then, that its most popular academic

* In December 1988, Kolakowski made his first return visit to Poland. His main lecture, again under the sponsorship of the Warsaw chapter of the Polish Philosophical Association, was held in the largest hall in Warsaw University, as well as in two nearby rooms, to which the talk was piped by public-address system. The lecture, entitled "Norms and Injunctions," was preceded and concluded by standing ovations. It argued (as I am told) that moral coherence could be achieved alternatively by a grounding in religion or nature but not in a skeptical pluralism. Kolakowski also appeared at smaller gatherings: with the Catholic Intellectual Club, with Lech Walesa and his shadow cabinet, and with the police, who called him in to headquarters for questioning.

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lecturer is Father Josef Tischner, both a philosopher and a practicing, sermonizing priest. Tischner has a prominent place in Polish letters and politics, as chaplain to Solidarity, a contributor to the Catholic intellectual monthly *Znak*, and a widely read writer on ethics, the philosophy of work, and the concept of solidarism. Tischner's views of the Kolakowski book were a matter of intense interest, and his critique packed one of the larger churches.

Tischner and Kolakowski differ on the relation between philosophy and religion. While Kolakowski portrays them as modally distinct reworkings of a common culture, ships passing in the night on a charted sea, Tischner sees both under the unified criterion of an absolute. He believes that philosophy has been dominated by a misleading metaphor of sight or clear vision inherited from the Greeks. The Bible, on the other hand, presents ultimate truth as something to be heard, or hearkened to. Tischner finds this Hebraic notion entering modern philosophy late, with such Jewish "philosophers of dialogue" as Emmanuel Levinas, Martin Buber, and Franz Rosenzweig, for whom the dominating metaphor is auditory rather than visual.

In Cracow, where every schoolchild is taken at least once to visit Oswiecim (Auschwitz), the mention of Jewish philosophy has more than a conceptual thrust. It evokes in itself a desire for dialogue with a missing Other, and conjures up a nostalgia for a (supposed) bygone pluralism that has become the prevailing mood in Polish culture. But does it follow that a Jewish-Christian philosophy of dialogue can give a more adequate account than Kolakowski's of religious experience? Of practical action? That it can help us to glimpse (or hearken to) an extra-historical absolute to which philosophy and religion must both submit? The eloquence and clarity with which he discusses such unresolved questions enable Tischner to retain an audience among philosophers unimpressed by the activities that have won him his popular following.

Cracow's dual crown of philosopher-priest was earlier worn by Karol Cardinal Wojtyla, now Pope John Paul II. The Cracow prelate had also been head of the ethics department at the Catholic University of Lublin, the only independent university in the Eastern bloc. Figuratively speaking, the tug between these two philosophical centers—Lublin and Cracow—is evident in his work. For if Cracow is the home of phenomenology—of a philosophical approach that stresses the examination of one's experience without reference to any external authority—Lublin is the arbiter of natural-law orthodoxy. And while Cracow, as Poland's historic intellectual center, wears its Catholicism in a relaxed way, provincial Lublin has been embattled. The Catholic University of Lublin has seen its mission not only in developing an intellectual center on a par with the Catholic University of Louvain in Belgium, but also in providing a philosophical alternative to atheism and materialism. With Poland ordaining half the priests in Europe, the stakes, as they appear from Lublin, have been high.

Several Lublin philosophers have reworked Thomist philosophy in a way that goes well beyond the contributions of the Catholic existentialist movement in France and Belgium. In a special 1986 volume devoted to the Lublin school, the American Catholic Philosophical Association grouped Wojtyla as one of them, a fitting recognition of the integration of his work into the mainstream. But such a treatment also underplays his boldness.

In ethics, where innovation is especially suspect, Wojtyla's contribution was to assert that a narrow reading of the traditional Aristotelian definition of a man as a rational animal (a "species being" in the Marxian phrase) is an insufficient starting point. Defined in species terms, each person is thereby reduced to the level of the world, or cosmos. This cosmological view, which scholasticism transmitted from the Greeks to modern science, "excludes the possibility of enhancing what is irreducible in man." Man as a unique person, responsible for his own choices and the formation of his own character, requires, according to Wojtyla, a philosophical method that sees these choices from within, as they appear from the first-person perspective of experience (*Erlebnis*) as we live it. Wojtyla found such a method in the phenomenology of Max Scheler.

The first-person perspective, however, opens the door to pluralism and subjectivism, not to mention Protestantism. If human consciousness is our point of departure, have we not forfeited natural-law realism? What becomes of the Church's claim to be the authoritative interpreter of objective moral reality?

Such questions Wojtyla addressed early, first in a book on the deficiencies of Scheler's phenomenological method for a Christian ethics, and later in a continuing debate with himself and his Lublin and Cracow colleagues over the first chapter of his most important book, *The Acting Person*. His best, though philosophically still unsatisfactory attempt at a resolution of the problem is found in a short article entitled "Subjectivity and the Irreducible in Man" published in *Analecta Husserliana* in 1978, the year his exploration of the problem was cut short by his elevation to the papacy.

The solution for Wojtyla is to accept two complementary philosophical methods: the cosmological (or narrowly metaphysical) and the personalistic (or phenomenological). Each can aspire to a realism that overcomes the split between subject and object, but neither method is sufficient in itself. Yet it remains an unresolved question for Wojtyla what the precise relation between these two methods might be, and whether, in the end, they are ultimately reconcilable.

Wojtyla's essay is still read closely in Poland, and discussed, like any other piece of philosoph-

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ical writing, without sanctimony or deference. Lublin's most eminent metaphysician, M.A. Krapiec, sometimes described as "more Catholic than the Pope," holds the whole discussion of complementarity to be misdirected; there can be no complementarity, only subordination of all methods to the properly metaphysical. A more sympathetic but equally orthodox view, taught in the Lublin department of ethics, notes that Wojtyla calls the phenomenological method "expedient" for ethics and philosophical anthropology but not ultimately authoritative; this is taken as proof that he affirms a neo-Thomist realism that embraces both the cosmological and the personalistic approaches.

In Cracow, by contrast, the prevailing view is that the Pope's phenomenology introduces a new emphasis: by reducing reliance upon a single authoritative method, it encourages intellectual flexibility. This also applies to inquiry in the natural sciences, as evidenced in a Vatican-sponsored Cracow conference on Galileo. Indeed, Wojtyla's alternation between subjective and objective methods recalls the arbitrary alternation between intuitive and empirical methods that modern science has used to evade philosophically troubling questions. For this very reason, there are, finally, Cracow philosophers who reject Wojtyla's dual approach in favor of a unified phenomenological method applicable to science and morals alike.

It has been noted, incessantly, that John Paul II is the first Polish pope. But more remarkable than his nationality is his intellectuality, an attribute essential for spiritual leadership in the Cracow-Lublin milieu from which he springs.

THE high professional standard to which all Polish philosophy aspires is in large part a legacy of the Lwow-Warsaw school, which flourished between the wars. That school was founded by Kazimierz Twardowski at the University of Lwow in the first decade of this century.

Rather than any doctrine or set method, Twardowski imparted to his students a sense of precision and discipline. Though a few students were Catholics or Communists, they pursued a liberal vision of theoretical inquiry independent of religious or political concerns. If there was an extra-philosophical motivation to their work, it was to develop in a newly independent Poland an exact approach to philosophy, fully as rigorous as anything to be found in the German-speaking or English-speaking world.

In this they succeeded. When, with Polish independence (1918), they moved to Warsaw, that city became one of the three or four leading places in the world for logic and philosophy of science. In Poland today the Lwow-Warsaw school is called "analytic," since its way of doing "small philosophy" most closely approximates the dominant Anglo-American style. Its interest in scientific method and formal notation has also invited comparison with the Vienna Circle, so that some writers have labeled it "positivist." But neither of these labels quite fits: there is in the Polish work a cultivated interest in the history of philosophy, an openness to speculative questions, and a combination of passion and intellectuality that give it a character of its own.

A recent history of the Lwow-Warsaw school by Jan Wolenski—cited by young Polish philosophers in a 1988 poll as one of the most important books published in the 1980's—devotes long sections to some of the leading writers in this diverse group: Ajdukiewicz, Kotarbinski, Lesniewski, Lukasiewicz, Tarski. Wolenski observes, sadly, that the war and its Stalinist aftermath decimated, dispersed, and silenced the Warsaw philosophers. But the fact is that the Warsaw school did continue during the war and afterward. Just as Wojtyla studied at an underground seminary, and Roman Ingarden taught an underground seminar, in Warsaw there was a full-fledged underground philosophy department which persisted as the city was destroyed around it. Among a people inclined to heroism, the memory of purely theoretical work pursued under cataclysmic conditions and supported neither by church nor party is a continuing source of inspiration.

I had an intimation of its power over tea with the widow of Tadeusz Kotarbinski, herself a former chairman of the logic department of Warsaw University and the leading defender in Poland of her husband's doctrine of reism. We met to review a translation I had done of her memoir on Twardowski's personal magnetism. But what she really had in mind was to discuss something I had written for a forthcoming panel on her husband's work.

Reism (from the Latin for "thing") holds that only those sentences are meaningful which can be translated into statements about particular things. No universal notions, no types, abstract sets, classes, or collectivities have any reality apart from the particulars that make them up. Though the English-speaking world is the historic home of nominalist thought, attempts in this century to sustain such views in Britain and America—by Bertrand Russell and Willard V. Quine, for example—have been retracted or reconsidered by their authors. Kotarbinski's reism, improved by the criticisms of Ajdukiewicz and supplemented by Lesniewski's ingenious symbolic devices, extended a nominalist view into ethics and mathematics, as well as empirical science. Though utterly out of academic fashion in Poland today, it remains the most rigorous 20th-century version of an abiding tendency in Western philosophy.

Kotarbinska was less interested in my attempt to give a favorable account of this system than in my incomplete understanding of it. So we sat for a few hours exploring the finer points of reist logic. I returned the next day for further instruction, and resolved to make suitable corrections in my paper. But the more memorable lessons were in the patient, persistent tone of her voice, the intense concentration in her blue-gray eyes, and

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the death-camp number of the same color on her pale arm.

She, along with the cream of the Warsaw philosophical community, attended the panel on Kotarbinski. The attraction was the return to Warsaw of a former instructor in the underground philosophy department, who emigrated to America during the Stalinist period. During the war, he taught logic from Kotarbinski's *Elements of the Theory of Knowledge, Formal Logic, and Scientific Method* in a manner that is still famous: he would open the book to an assigned page at random and ask students to choose whether they would like to be examined on the top or bottom half of the page. This instructor had actually lived his reism, which he had taken in a pacifist and altruist direction. If abstractions were false names, he had reasoned, and only particular things counted, no ideal could ever excuse human suffering, or justify the taking of a life, for a human life was a concrete particular, while an ideal was a spurious universal, a false name. Thus, during the 1944 Warsaw uprising, when other members of the underground university joined in the fight, this reist instructor had refused to touch a weapon, dedicating himself instead to caring for the wounded, with a heroism that won him military decorations.

More than forty years later, the instructor, though a specialist on other topics, chose to deliver his homecoming paper on ethics. His position was exactly the one he had lived: the only moral imperative was to alleviate the suffering of concrete individuals, with one's first obligation to be a trustworthy protector to one's closest dependents.

In the discussion that followed, a century of history seemed to burst forth from every question. The conference was an international one. The Americans reacted instinctively against the underlying nominalism. A Nobel laureate asked whether the ethical position would rule out just wars, like the one that had abolished American slavery or defeated Hitler. ("Of course," was the response.) A Briton believed that by taking out American citizenship the reist had subscribed to "self-evident truths." (The reist response: one had simply added a further legal attribute to his individuality.) A piercing question came from a Pole who raised the case of Janusz Korczak.

Korczak, a writer and educator, directed a Jewish children's home during the war. When the time came to deport the children, the Nazis, in consideration of his eminence and advanced age, offered him safety. He instead chose to accompany his charges to their death in Treblinka. Was Korczak's martyrdom a vainly romantic one? After all, the children died anyway. What did it avail to have added one more body to the pyre? Were the few days of comfort for the doomed infants worth an old man's life? The reist, as if to confess that his life and logic were inseparable, responded with dignity that he could not master his emotions to analyze this case. Yet there was an answer consistent with his position. Independently of reism, Kotarbinski taught that the ethical must be distinguished from what was merely efficacious or pleasurable. In happy circumstances, the ethical, the efficacious, and the pleasurable might overlap, but in Korczak's situation, doing the instinctive moral thing—protecting the helpless who lived under his care—would clearly not be profitable to him, and could not change the result. Korczak's choice was thus the epitome of a pure, but not supererogatory moral act. It was as close as reism comes to an example of holiness.

Poland's recent history has posed many such stark choices, not at the least of which has been the choice to engage in philosophy at all. In comfortable circumstances, theoretical work can permit one to satisfy many extraneous desires, but occasionally history decrees otherwise. Quite apart from its theoretical contributions, the Lwow-Warsaw school—its very name referring to a city no longer in Polish hands—conjures up an unswerving, peripatetic focus on the life of the mind.

WHICH brings us to the relation of philosophy to current Polish politics and thought.

During the sporadic 1988 industrial unrest, sympathy strikes were announced at several Polish universities. At a seminar led by a philosopher known for his support of the strikers, the students nevertheless appeared on schedule. The professor was delayed by an encounter with *agents provocateurs* posing as disruptive student strikers. As a concession to the week's events, the professor explained the reason for his tardiness and put an unassigned question to the seminar: what are the specifically political obligations of a university, or of a student or teacher of philosophy in a university?

His own answer, informed by underground study under the Nazi occupation, was that a university has the obligation to protect the interests of free inquiry, and a philosopher to pursue such inquiry, laying down his books only to take up arms. To be sure, students and professors might also, as engaged citizens, pursue an ideal of freedom in a political context. But politics was a different calling, with its own kind of excellence and its own brand of courage. As for politics in today's Poland, "there is no philosophy in it"—an everyday Polish expression used when one has to force open a window, or kick down a door.

In politics, as in philosophy, every school of Polish thought aspires toward "realism," but here the realities dictate that tenacity, not subtlety, be the required virtue. Intellectuals in the service of the government and opposition alike understand that the fundamentals have remained constant for more than forty years, and are not likely to change peacefully. Since most of the reforms currently sought in the Soviet Union are already in exis-

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tence in Poland—private agriculture, a private building boom, multi-candidate elections, lively political dissent, hard-currency borrowings to cushion the shock of innovation, massive emigration—*glasnost* and *perestroika* do not generate euphoria among the Poles.

Nevertheless, as in 1978-81, many Poles again seem to be preparing themselves intellectually for a pluralism that might at some time take shape. Poland's recent negotiated movement to a tutelary parliamentarianism under the Communist party and the military has already encouraged a plurality of voices. In the opposition, the social democracy of Solidarity is criticized from within by more militant union organizers and from without by a well-advanced liberal (in the philosophically educated sense) movement stressing, *à la* Hayek, the rule of law and private initiative. On the government side, there are, in addition to the hard-line Stalinists, party members who cite the disarming proposal of a Warsaw philosopher that the Communist party be elevated to the status of the Queen of England, so that the country can attend to its own governance.

The philosophical grounds of these positions are studied more closely in Poland than anywhere else in the West. The lack of a living tradition of self-government means that a conceptual apparatus adequate to constitutional democracy is especially important there. Young Poles seem to understand that concepts like a legal person, freedom of contract, civic virtue, trust, separation of powers, and the rule of law must be reconstructed from the ground up, if prepared minds are to seize such opportunities as may present themselves.

Those opportunities, as always in the past 200 years, are played out on a stage set by the great powers. A possible outcome envisaged by realistic Poles (and enraging to younger ones) is a sardonic twist on the old Russo-German condominium: West German bankers leading the West in underwriting a stagnant "stability" while the Soviets and their local agents use the twin specters of German economic penetration and labor unrest to justify a continuing "security" role. There is no philosophy in any of that.

But there is a poetic rendering of a philosophical idea that covers it. The interwar poet Boleslaw Lesmian, under the influence of Henri Bergson, coined a word that anticipates Poland's current political and economic plight. Roughly translated it means a not-quite-incarnation (*niedowcielenie*), a philosophical "becoming" that never becomes what it is supposed to be. Poland itself is in this tantalizing state, with the resources and aspiration to become a prosperous parliamentary democracy, yet one that exists—like the constructions of the philosopher—only in the mind's eye.

It says more than I can about the reflective turn of recent Polish thought that Zbigniew Herbert, the country's uncrowned poet laureate, often speaks through a persona he calls Pan (Sir or Mister) Cogito. A cerebral character drawn to the gray rather than the green, Cogito ponders the predicament of his country, contemplates the ashes of his hopes, and muses ruefully over his own lack of colorful language. In Herbert's recent *Report from a Besieged City*, we learn that Cogito's soul has departed his body during his lifetime and has neglected to leave a forwarding address. It wanders the continents, while Pan Cogito remains to pursue a bleak, sedentary, abstracted existence.

Pan Cogito contrasts sharply with Poland's 19th-century poetic beau ideal, Pan Tadeusz, the hero of Adam Mickiewicz's rollicking epic. A warm-blooded, good-natured nobleman of occupied Lithuania, Sir Tadeusz is an entirely instinctive fellow, and his instincts are always admirable. There is not a philosophical bone in his well-toned body.

Sir Tadeusz and Mr. Cogito are both present in the dialectic, or logical conversation, of Polish intellectual life. On the one hand, the aspirations of the gentry are still evident in Poland: for courtliness and grace, for open-handed hospitality, for private property, for a hearty piety and patriotism. The intelligentsia, indeed, sees itself as the repository of the gentrified ideal. On the other hand, the voice of Pan Cogito reminds Poles grimly that their situation mocks their most cherished virtues: what kind of courtliness is possible in the queue for toilet paper, what hospitality with ration cards, what private initiative under the bureaucracy, what patriotism and piety under the tutelage of the "elder brother" to the East?

Still, with philosophy, poetry, and humor Poles do find ways to preserve their dignity. One of the innumerable American-Russian-Polish jokes making the rounds of Warsaw captures their mood. Three oceanographic teams are bidding for the contract to raise the wreck of the *Titanic*. The American team offers to do the job for the contents of the ship safe. The Russians underbid them by offering to raise the wreck for the scrap metal in the hull. But the Polish team underbids them both. "We will do the job," they say bravely, "as a memorial to the orchestra, which kept playing as the ship went down."

No one in Poland doubts that the country is sinking. No one doubts that the government's main motive for political reform is a desperate attempt to buy time and capital. All the more reason, then, to treasure every last shred of civilized life. Ergo, philosophical study, in eclipse elsewhere, is intensely valued in Poland.

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Church & City

HIS EMINENCE AND HIZZONER: A CANDID EXCHANGE. By JOHN CARDINAL O'CONNOR and MAYOR EDWARD I. KOCH. *Morrow. 366 pp. $18.95.*

Reviewed by SCOTT MCCONNELL

THIS fascinating cooperative effort by John Cardinal O'Connor, the Archbishop of New York, and Mayor Edward Koch may one day be regarded as an important historical document. It is not always deftly written; the format of alternating essays does not allow the two men to contend with one another's ideas; many of the Mayor's general arguments will be familiar to readers of his two previous books. But because New York City now faces a mounting agenda of social problems whose resolution may determine whether it flourishes or withers, this frank and probing work by two engaged and talented men will stand as a telling statement about the condition of urban America in the late 1980's.

The idea of co-authoring a book based on the themes of their private conversations was initiated by Cardinal O'Connor; it was natural, though, that the city's political reporters came to view the project as something that might aid the Mayor's political fortunes. This is not entirely a frivolous notion.

A central thread of Mayor Koch's last book, *Politics* (1986), concerned his gradual movement away from the liberal, Greenwich Village "reform" milieu in which he began his career and his newfound appreciation for the white ethnic city bosses of the type that had exercised power in New York since the last century. Indeed, the Mayor expressed a personal preference for these so-called "regulars," cut political deals with them, and with the help of the constituencies they represented won three mayoral elections, the last two by landslide margins. During those years, the city, which had been nearly flat on its back during the mid-70's, recovered strongly, and Mayor Koch seemed politically untouchable.

Then, in three short years, he went into something of a political free fall. Since the last mayoral election in 1985, New York has seen AIDS spread out from the city's well-organized and relatively affluent homosexual population to drug users, their sexual partners, and their babies, bringing the epidemic into the streets and flooding the public hospitals. Wall Street, which had been exuberantly pumping money throughout the metropolitan region for much of the 80's, suddenly laid an egg. Crack arrived, intensifying the social pathologies in New York's underclass, nearly doubling the jail population, and threatening the city's criminal-justice system with paralysis.

These three developments, all well beyond Koch's political control, made things in New York seem, suddenly, very bad, so bad that no one could with confidence claim that they would soon get better. But imposed on top of them was the "scandal" that engulfed the Mayor's administration itself.

In the context of the generally perceived deterioration in the city's condition, it hardly mattered that the scandal involved no one who was close to Koch, or that it was, by the standards of American urban politics, quite unexceptional. Caught up in it were several of the "regular" politicians with largely Catholic, middle- and working-class constituencies in the outer boroughs whom Koch had embraced at the expense of his links to Manhattan liberals. The sight of the Mayor's new political allies slashing their wrists, or copping pleas, or being carted off to prison, gave all the political groups which disliked him on other, more ideological grounds—his celebration of the virtues of the middle class, his fierce defense of Israel, his outspoken solidarity with Soviet dissidents, and perhaps most of all his refusal to join other Democrats in pretending that Jesse Jackson is a beneficent moral force—a way of asserting that he ran a uniquely crooked administration.

Thus a man who a few short years before had seemed one of the most magical figures in American politics saw his political touch evaporate. From having won reelection in 1985 with 78 percent of the vote (and 64 percent in a three-person Democratic primary), he witnessed a drop in his poll ratings—measured against an unexceptional field of opponents—into the low 30's. In this context, the publication of *His Eminence and Hizzoner* has something about it of an embattled politician reaching out once again to his "regulars"—but at an entirely more dignified level than heretofore. Burned by his trust in the machine, the Mayor now reappears side by side with a man who preeminently represents an institution that has been building a mass base, so to speak, for two millennia.

But there is also something about this pairing of the Mayor with the Cardinal that goes well beyond electoral needs, and is timely in a different way. For though the Catholic Church has played a vital role in educating children, giving succor to the poor, and healing the sick in America's cities ever since the first waves of Irish immigrants, the social and moral teachings of Catholicism have perhaps never been so relevant and, arguably, so much needed as they are today. If, for Mayor Koch, this book is like reaching for a life preserver, for Cardinal O'Connor it is an occasion to make a sustained intellectual case for the Church's social views. Taking full advantage of the opportunity, the Cardinal provides here a series of elegantly argued and sometimes delightfully polemical essays on questions ranging from church-state relations, to Catholic education, to the Church's views on AIDS, drug abuse, and sexual morality.

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As THESE essays illustrate, the Cardinal is a man fiercely protective of the Church and its prerogatives. Since becoming Archbishop of New York five years ago, he has waged a series of battles in the courts to defend Church functions from the incursions of the city's liberal elites. The first instance came in the form of New York's "Executive Order 50," which mandated that no organization receiving city contracts could discriminate on the basis of "sexual orientation." For the Church, the proposed remedy meant an affirmative-action program to recruit homosexuals for the staff of the Archdiocese's child and foster-care agencies. The Cardinal resisted. The Church, he maintained, might well hire someone who had engaged in homosexual behavior in the past, and who might, through human weakness, do so again in the future, but he would not permit the Archdiocese to be lured by the "Trojan Horse" of city contracts into active recruitment of people unwilling to support the Church's values. The New York Court of Appeals eventually ruled in the Archdiocese's favor.

The second "Trojan Horse" was the Wilder case, which grew out of a lawsuit filed by the ACLU against New York City. The settlement eventually accepted by the City would have required all children in foster-care programs run by Catholic social-service agencies to be provided with access to the "full range of family-planning information," including counseling about abortion and contraception. A further provision of the settlement stated that "Religious symbols in a child's room are permitted so long as they have been requested by the child. Agencies shall not display excessive religious symbols." The Cardinal caustically comments: "What is an excessive religious symbol? A crucifix? A Star of David? A Roman collar on a priest? . . . Anything the court, the ACLU, or any other agency may define it as being? Will we be permitted to have prayers before and after meals? Will we be allowed to teach that sex before marriage is wrong? Will we be allowed to teach that anything is wrong?"

That his institution is obliged to teach that some behavior is actually *wrong* is an idea that occurs repeatedly in the Cardinal's essays, as does the notion of the Natural Moral Law—a phrase not often heard in discussions of New York's social problems. The Cardinal first raises this notion in relating his debate with the Mayor over distributing condoms to prisoners in jails. The Cardinal's point, in essence, is that there is no free lunch in politics; no actions of the government are value-free, but all are invariably tied to the question of, as he puts it, "*whose* values, *which* values" are to prevail. Proceeding by way of a capsule history of Natural Moral Law, he ends by criticizing the Mayor's plan on the grounds that it is the function of political leadership to help the body politic operate at the highest and not the lowest moral level. On similar grounds he deprecates the city's plan for distributing "clean" needles to drug addicts, the city's efforts to prevent AIDS by legitimating "grossly unnatural sexual practices" provided they are carried out with condoms, and the city's efforts to teach contraceptive methods in public-school health clinics.

In each instance the Cardinal accuses the city of treating only the symptoms of "wrong" behavior rather than the underlying roots. And indeed a strong case can be made for the proposition that most of the city's most quantifiable and menacing social pathologies—illegitimate births, AIDS, and drug use—stem directly from a breakdown in moral behavior. Though he does not say so explicitly, the Cardinal would also be on firm ground in noting that all the measures the city has so far taken in a spirit of practical liberalism have not made much of a dent.

CARDINAL O'CONNOR does not here address the broader reality of the city's economy, at least not in a sustained fashion, and readers seeking concrete answers to its seemingly intractable fiscal problems are unlikely to find much guidance in his general advice to "enhance the worth of each human person." Nevertheless, on a wide range of social, educational, and moral issues these essays by the Cardinal give a daunting impression of self-confidence, rootedness, and wisdom. The contributions of his co-author seem somewhat pallid by comparison.

Perhaps this is simply because the Mayor's views are by now so much better known; more likely, the Mayor himself is less confident and jaunty than in the past. Indeed, he seems even to have lost his relish for combat: his repudiation of Jesse Jackson here is almost pro-forma, and many of his best arguments are put forth in a tired tone of "this-is-the-way-I-feel-about-it, but-the-tide-is-running-the-other-way."

Still, Mayor Koch's sections of the book do bear out his well-earned reputation for public candor. Unlike other city politicians, he minces no words in describing New York's central dilemma, one which any mayor not determined to run the city into the ground will have to grapple with. In brief, no matter how intense the claims of the city's underclass are on its fiscal resources, a mayor must "do [his] best . . . to prevent New York from becoming unattractive to taxpayers and employers and middle-class people who pay the taxes and create the jobs." A corollary to this is Koch's blunt admission that he no longer really knows what to do to help the poor. As he puts it, it is not that the poor "aren't deserving," it is that "our help doesn't do them much good and our energies might be better spent elsewhere."

THE Mayor goes further: doing too much of what is almost universally considered to be the right thing may well have negative consequences. Thus, he tells here the story of his visit to a privately owned apartment building in the Bronx; the building, in dismal shape, is inhabited by relatively poor, struggling, working-class people. Across the street, however, the city has used its colossal housing budget to create 900 spanking new apartments, with new kitchens and parquet floors, and is in the process of giving them, rent free, to homeless families. The Mayor raises a point which few politicians (or journalists) now dare to express, yet one that uncannily complements the rather differently grounded viewpoint of the Cardi-

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nal: what kind of message, he asks, is the city sending to those who make an effort to hold jobs and provide for their own housing when it gives free housing to those who will not, or cannot, or at any rate do not make such an effort?

Mayor Koch displays similarly O'Connor-like insight in discussing the pernicious effects of the culture of affirmative action. Noting that he is regularly accused of being "insensitive" on racial issues, he asks what, then, being "sensitive" means—and answers that it seems to mean professing one's belief in racial equality while understanding "privately" that one cannot actually expect members of minorities to meet the same standards as others. As the Mayor astutely puts it: "The result is to do with kind words what was once done with racial segregation . . . to isolate minorities from full participation in American society."

It may be that, come this fall, New York will lose a mayor with the courage to talk like this; and it may lose him precisely because he does talk like this. Yet no one should underestimate Koch's chances for political recovery, either. For all his present difficulties, Koch remains perhaps the most verbally adroit and well-informed elected politician in the country. As a political document, at any rate, *His Eminence and Hizzoner* is likely to do little to further the Mayor's electoral chances. As a volume bringing a powerful joint perspective to bear on the city's social problems, it is a very significant work.

Movie Mogul

GOLDWYN: A BIOGRAPHY. By A. SCOTT BERG. *Knopf. 579 pp. $24.95.*

Reviewed by JONATHAN ROSEN

ACCORDING to a by-now familiar script, the Jewish moguls of Hollywood arrived on these shores penniless, like Joseph in Egypt; even more remarkably than the biblical Joseph, they proceeded not so much to interpret Pharaoh's dreams as to do his dreaming for him. Their desire for success and acceptance, projected into a thousand theaters, became the stuff of American myth. The latest examination of this myth, A. Scott Berg's *Goldwyn,* is a vast, minutely detailed portrait of a single figure in that heroic company, one of the most famous of the independent Hollywood producers and an acknowledged builder of the movie industry.

Berg's narrative invites such easy biblical comparisons. The first chapter of *Goldwyn,* indeed, is titled "Exodus" and is prefaced by a half-page summary of Jewish history phrased, like the voice-over at the start of the movie *The Ten Commandments,* in pseudo-biblical cadences:

> . . . and the children of Israel dispersed, embarking on an endless cycle of settlement and influence that invoked persecution and expulsion.

Is it any wonder that from such beginnings we should find by Chapter 10, when Goldwyn and his second wife, the young and beautiful Catholic actress Frances Howard, have moved to Hollywood, that we have arrived in "Canaan"?

Born in Warsaw in 1879, Samuel Goldwyn began life as Schmuel Gelbfisz. Finding himself, at age fifteen, fatherless and poor, he walked 500 miles to Hamburg with a vague hope of reaching America. Three years later he arrived somewhere near Maine, entering the United States illegally by walking across the Canadian border.

Goldwyn's early rise in the glove business is an American success story in itself. He started in upstate New York's Gloversville, sweeping a factory for three dollars a week, and ended as a prosperous sales representative for the Elite Glove Company in Manhattan. Achievement enough for a first-generation immigrant—but men like Goldwyn were out to recreate themselves. In 1913 Samuel Goldfish, as he was then called, saw a "flicker" in a Herald Square theater; it was only a "Bronco Billy" Western, but the brief image of a man leaping on a horse was like a burning bush, out of which spoke the spirit of America, and it changed his life. That day he vowed he would pro-

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duce a film, and talked his brother-in-law into joining the venture.

From a company Sam Goldfish formed in 1916 with the playwright and producer Edgar Selwyn, the name Goldwyn was created. Even after he was forced out of the company, Goldwyn retained the name as his own. It was one more step on the road to self-invention: he named himself after his company the way actors in real life imitated the selves they invented on screen. In the following years Goldwyn participated in the establishment of one production company after another, playing a formative role in such enterprises as Paramount, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, and United Artists. A man who argued with everyone (even when in agreement), Goldwyn was in the end forced to leave them all. For most of his long career, he remained an independent producer.

Goldwyn's production style was one of total involvement with every aspect of picture-making: hand-picking the stars, visiting the sets, examining all the scripts, viewing all the rushes. Like his fellow moguls he was a patriarch—in the sense not only of founding an industry but of taking a close paternal responsibility for every aspect of its health and well-being. The father's role was played out quite literally: Goldwyn and his kind gave homes to an entire population of young runaway girls who came to Hollywood to become stars. And if these actresses needed fathers, men like Goldwyn needed families. Learning that his discovery Vilma Banky, the silent film star, intended to elope with Rod La Rocque, Goldwyn demanded: "How could you do this to me? . . . I brought you to this country. I acted like a father. I protected you. What are you, ashamed?" Then he threw the largest wedding in Hollywood memory.

With his own family he was not so successful. He did not speak to Ruth, the daughter of his first marriage, for eleven years after a fight over a baked potato. His son was a typically neglected rich kid dumped in Grauman's Chinese Theater on Sundays while his father sneaked off to play poker. Goldwyn sent money to his own mother in Poland, but though he traveled extensively he could not face the country of his birth, forcing her to come to Frankfurt, Germany to see him. Perhaps it was a similar desire to efface the past that kept him from visiting his dying sister in America. "I hate hospitals," he told her daughter. "When Eddie Cantor was sick in the hospital, I didn't even visit him."

A businessman, Goldwyn was not simply out to make money. The early immigrant desire to belong, to be an American, shaped his taste and aspirations. Though he was, in director Billy Wilder's words, "A titan with an empty skull, not confused by anything he read, which he didn't," he nevertheless had an "instinct for the better things." This yearning for what was "classy" showed itself in Goldwyn's expensive wardrobe, in his tennis and riding lessons, his hiring of President Roosevelt's son, his art collection. He added a special division called "Eminent Authors" to his film company, employing writers he had never read for the sake of their reputation or social standing alone. George Bernard Shaw and H.G. Wells were repeatedly wooed, without success. Maurice Maeterlinck, the Belgian Nobel Prize winner and author of *The Life of the Bee,* was imported to Hollywood, given a house on a hilltop and a large salary, and introduced to the press and at parties by Goldwyn as "The greatest writer on earth. He's the guy who wrote *The Birds and the Bees.*" When at last Maeterlinck was sent home (he produced nothing but an abstract and unusable story called "The Power of Light"), Goldwyn comforted him, "Don't worry, Maurice. You'll make good yet."

IN ALL these respects Goldwyn could not have been more unlike the famous literary editor Maxwell Perkins, who was the subject of Berg's first biography. Perkins, the equal of the artists he worked with, inspired writers like Thomas Wolfe and F. Scott Fitzgerald to create their finest achievements. Goldwyn was a semiliterate, uneducated man, as famous for his malapropisms as for his movies, who gathered around him men and women of talent he would then bully and bribe into making the kind of art he valued. Goldwyn's own experience as a poor, self-made man put him, he believed, in deeper touch with the moviegoing public than were the writers and directors he employed. His concerns for that audience's sensibilities translated themselves into "The Goldwyn Touch"—a vague blend of restraint and decorum under a veneer of sentimentality that was somehow drawn out of all who worked for him. The astonishing thing is that, in his own way, Goldwyn often brought out the best in those he hired. Laurence Olivier, having previously worked only on the stage, claimed it was Goldwyn's blustering on the set that turned him into a film actor.

Goldwyn survived longer than most in the industry, making films into old age (he died at ninety-four). During World War II, echoes of the Holocaust reached him—one of his sisters and her husband were deported and killed—but though his donations to Jewish philanthropies increased, he remained absorbed in the making of pictures like *Guys and Dolls* that would appeal to a wide American audience, free of politics or controversy. He always preferred seeing his own movies to anyone else's, and would watch *Stella Dallas* and *Wuthering Heights* over and over, crying.

UNLIKE Neal Gabler in *An Empire of Their Own: How the Jews Invented Hollywood,* A. Scott Berg declines to speculate here about the strange link between the Jews and Hollywood, concentrating instead on the life of his subject and the movies he made. But such speculation obtrudes nevertheless. Surely one of the intriguing aspects of men like Goldwyn has to do with all the things they sought to hide—their Jewish accents, their crassness, their eccentrically disguised insecurities. Yet in retrospect, and despite everything they tried self-consciously to push away or cover over, they also seem, more even than later generations in American Jewish life, peculiarly free. They have the appeal of Jewish gangsters, looming as large as any first generation of pioneers and incidentally forming a link to a vanished world of Eastern European Jewish exuberance.

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At the same time, there seems something pitiable and lost about them, and their disguises and evasions can strike us as pathetically empty gestures. Goldwyn in particular reminds one of the Wizard of Oz, as that figure is finally revealed in the movie version: a little man hiding behind a curtain as he projects tremendous and beguiling images on a screen. If Dorothy, that quintessential American girl, can go home whenever she wants, and will reawaken surrounded as ever by her faithful traveling companions, loving relatives and friends all, the wizard will forever remain a stranger—a peddler, a Gypsy (why not a Jew?), no more at home in Kansas than in Oz, and soon enough to resume his endless journey.

Goldwyn opens with a portentous epigraph from Shelley's "Ozymandias," with its thundering line, "Look on my works, ye mighty, and despair!" But it is hard to match this poem's image of ruination and hollow triumph with the figure of Goldwyn as Berg presents him. The epigraph suggests that if Goldwyn and men like him begin as Joseph they end up as Pharaoh, constructing great towers that fall to dust and serve only as monuments of human vanity. But there is no real evidence of this in the book, which gives us rather the rambling life of an American producer who had his ups and downs but essentially enjoyed an unusually prosperous and successful career which he seems never to have regretted.

This is hardly to suggest that Goldwyn is not an enigmatic figure; only that the enigma is not explored here. *Goldwyn* is altogether a book without a thesis—part biography, part Hollywood history, part trivia storehouse. In the final chapter, "A Slow Fade to Black," epigraph and ending merge. We see Goldwyn the titan fighting to the last—when a nurse offers to help him eat, he replies, "Help? How the hell do you think I got out of Poland?" Lastly we are given Goldwyn buried in his crypt like Ozymandias in his bed of sand, while "the City of Angels stretches far away." The melodrama of the close is more tribute than condemnation. It is as if, even from the grave, Goldwyn had successfully seduced one more writer into falling under the spell of "The Goldwyn Touch."

Race & Voting

WHY AMERICANS DON'T VOTE. By FRANCES FOX PIVEN and RICHARD A. CLOWARD. *Pantheon. 325 pp. $19.95.*

WHOSE VOTES COUNT?: AFFIRMATIVE ACTION AND MINORITY VOTING RIGHTS. By ABIGAIL THERNSTROM. *Harvard University Press. 316 pp. $25.00.*

Reviewed by BARRY R. GROSS

FRANCES FOX PIVEN and Richard A. Cloward's new book should really be called "Why *Some* Americans Don't Vote," for the truth is that the educated, the middle classes, and the wealthy in America do vote in relatively high proportions. It is the poor and the uneducated who do not. Piven and Cloward think they know why. Where once these two sociologists argued (in *Poor People's Movements,* 1977) that voting was a trap devised to prevent the downtrodden from forming the political movements necessary to change the system, now they think voting is a way to alter the system, but the trap is impediments to registration. Politicians and the seriously monied make it difficult for the poor to register and vote because they believe such people will vote against the establishment's interests.

A neat point, but the evidence does not bear it out. In 1984 and again in 1988, not only did massive voter-registration drives fail—far fewer new voters registered than were expected—but those who did register tended to vote along the same lines as the general electorate. Polls show that even among those

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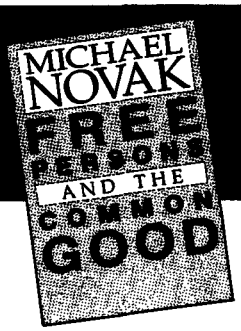

FREE PERSONS AND THE COMMON GOOD

By MICHAEL NOVAK

In commemoration of the fortieth anniversary of the publication of Jacques Maritain's *The Person and the Common Good,* Michael Novak's ground-breaking new work interweaves the perennial notion of "the common good" with the liberal emphasis upon the "free person." His arguments will engage a wide and diverse audience from libertarians to socialists, and both liberals and conservatives.

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Also of Interest Taking Glasnost Seriously: *Toward an Open Soviet Union*
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President Reagan asked Michael Novak to head the U.S. delegation at a round of the Helsinki Process discussions on Security and Cooperation in Europe in 1986 in Bern, Switzerland. This book is a collection of Novak's speeches in Bern, along with related articles and congressional testimony. Distributed by arrangement with the American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research.

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who did not register, most would have voted the same way as those who did.

Suppose, then, we were to devise vastly improved registration and voting procedures, ones that would go well beyond what was tried in 1984 and 1988. There is still little ground for thinking that most of today's poor and uneducated nonvoters would take advantage of them. In 1968, in New York City, bitterly fought battles resulted in placing intermediate and high schools under the control of boards elected from citizens in local school districts. In the years since then, the turnout for school-board elections has averaged 10 percent of eligible voters. In the campaign for this year's elections, despite wide and continuing publicity about blatant corruption on many local boards, no more candidate petitions to run were filed than previously. Thus, although school issues impinge more directly than any other on the lives of citizens with school-age children, they neither run for the boards nor even vote for their members.

These are facts, and there are many more like them, which Piven and Cloward must explain away if they are to make a case. They fail utterly to do so.

WHICH brings us to Abigail Thernstrom, with her much more useful focus on the real and evolving nature of our electoral procedures. For, as she shows, affirmative action, if not in the sense intended by Piven and Cloward, *has* come to voting. It came, moreover, with no public debate. *Whose Votes Count?* has tried to kindle such a debate, but there have been no takers. Although the book has won prizes for its scholarship, it has been either ignored or trashed by reviewers who do not like its conclusions. Yet it remains vitally necessary reading, not only because it is a brilliant account of recent history but also because it is indispensable to understanding the redrawing of electoral districts that will inevitably follow the 1990 national census.

Abigail Thernstrom tells the detailed history of the 1965 Voting Rights Act, excellent legislation that came to be put to dubious use. Before passage of the Act, black Americans in the South had been prevented from registering and voting by fraudulent literacy tests, intimidation, beatings, and murder. By 1965, civil-rights leaders knew what they wanted and Lyndon Johnson gave it to them: a new and powerful Voting Rights Act. Black enfranchisement in the South followed almost immediately.

But with that success came new aspirations, as what began as an effort to give minorities a fair shake was turned into a means to ensure a "fair share." The goal became not simply black ballots, but black ballots that *really counted*, that had their "proper" weight. Down the road this would mean an insistence on single-member electoral-districting schemes that would "fairly reflect" the minority voting population—in short, schemes that would provide, to the degree possible, proportional racial and ethnic electoral representation.

The change occurred partly as a consequence of Southern white resistance to black political aspirations. By 1969, for example, Southern state legislators had made plain their readiness to frustrate black voters by instituting county-wide (at-large) voting, thus eliminating those districts that were likely to elect black representatives. Responding, the Supreme Court in *Allen* v. *State Board* (1969) read into the 1965 Act strong prohibitions against such maneuvers. In states covered by the Act, *all* voting changes, no matter how trivial, would henceforth require Justice Department approval (pre-clearance). The decision was a crucial turning point.

Another strand fed into the story as well. Mrs. Thernstrom reminds us that there were two voting-rights revolutions in the 1960's. The one that stayed in the headlines was initiated by the 1965 Act, "whose *single* aim was black enfranchisement in the South." The other, largely forgotten, was the promise of "one person, one vote." This promise was held out in a 1964 case, *Reynolds* v. *Sims*, brought, ironically enough, by white urban Alabama voters. But as Mrs. Thernstrom shows, the core notion in "one person, one vote" slowly undermined the unique and limited purpose of the Voting Rights Act. For "one person, one vote" raised the question: when does one, anyone, have a full vote? And how are we to count the value of a vote? The Court answered that question by ruling that legislative districts must be of virtually equal populations.

Other factors also played a part. The 1965 Act was aimed solely at Southern states, but since no Southern Congressman would vote for a bill that plainly said so, a formula had to be devised: any state in which fewer than 50 percent of the voting-age population actually voted and in which there was a literacy test (this was in 1965, before such tests were banned) would trigger the Act. What was intended was to reform such a state's voting procedures; once that was accomplished, the states would no longer be covered. In the language of the Act, they could "bail out." But in practice, it became impossible for any Southern state ever actually to bail out of Justice Department scrutiny. Moreover, because of peculiar demographic and voting patterns in jurisdictions in New York and Massachusetts, cases began to arise in those states, too, even though they had no prior history of black disenfranchisement.

THE debate over the meaning of "one person, one vote" dominated the struggle that led to the 1982 amendments to the Voting Rights Act, which is the centerpiece of Abigail Thernstrom's book. At the end of that battle, the standard of proof required for a showing of discrimination was lowered nationwide. Although the test was ostensibly still the denial of voting *opportunity*, in actual fact disproportionately low numbers of minority *victories* soon came to be taken as a sign that the law was being violated. The remedy then required was to create a maximum number of black- and Hispanic-majority single-member districts everywhere.

As Mrs. Thernstrom proceeds to argue, this legislation, aimed at reducing the political separation of the races and white political domination of blacks, may be serving instead to increase both. To con-

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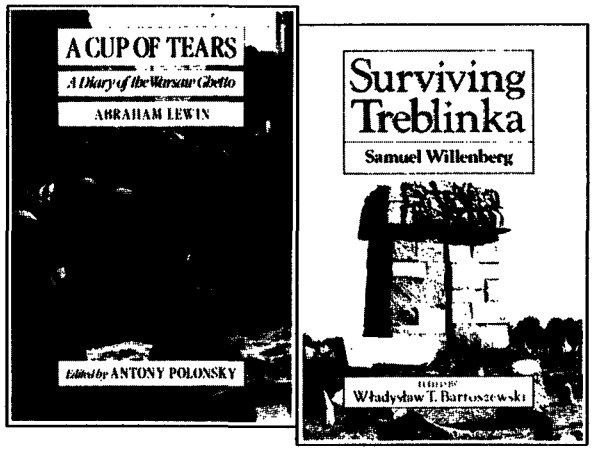
centrate black voters in "their own" districts, for instance, is also to concentrate white voters, and hence to reduce the pressure for interracial coalition *before* elections, which is the most effective time for them. Moreover, draining blacks from white districts can increase the number of white and, therefore, likely Republican districts. (This, if true, may be why the Reagan Justice Department adopted such a benign attitude toward racial redistricting.)

In any case, we have now come to the point where no electoral districting plan is likely to survive attack if it fails to provide the maximum number of "safe" minority seats. At-large voting has simply begun to disappear as a legitimate election technique. Black and Hispanic candidates everywhere have now become "entitled" to maximum protection from white competition. Indeed, some activists wish to go further, demanding the election not merely of black and Hispanic candidates but of the "correct" kind of black and Hispanic candidates.

ALL sorts of questions need to be asked about the dramatic upheaval we have witnessed in the purpose of the 1965 Voting Rights Act, but most of them have gone unaddressed. Instead, the single question dominating discussion has been: will whites vote for black candidates? Yet the answer to that question has been clear for some time. Tom Bradley, the first black mayor of Los Angeles, has now been elected to his fifth term in a city with only about 20-percent minority population, much of which does not vote. (Bradley also got more than 49 percent of the vote in his first gubernatorial run in California.) Andrew Young of Atlanta, Dutch Morial of New Orleans, Richard Arrington of Birmingham, Harold Washington of Chicago, Wilson Goode of Philadelphia, and James E. Chase of Spokane are all blacks who have won with significant numbers of white votes. In West Virginia, a state with only a 17-percent black population, Doug Wilder won the lieutenant governorship, carrying 44 percent of the white vote across a broad spectrum which was not even notably liberal. In Mississippi, Mike Espy got 48 percent of the white vote in his district, up from 10 percent in 1986. Jesse Jackson made a strong showing in the 1988 primaries and is now a viable presidential candidate, and Ron Brown has just become the first black since Reconstruction to head a national political party. Moreover, a white politician like Strom Thurmond, once an arch segregationist, must now court black votes.

Politics, in brief, has come to count for more in the United States, and race for less: politics working as it should, and very successfully by any reasonable standard. Unfortunately, not everybody's standards are reasonable; an army of activists is determined to take the Voting Rights Act as far down the road of quotas and required electoral outcomes as it will go. This is why the questions Abigail Thernstrom asks are so crucial.

Essential Reading



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Should we strive for racially and ethnically proportionate representation? Why? Is it constitutional to do so? Can one vote really be of greater or lesser value than another? What is the standard of judgment? Do blacks and Hispanics really constitute voting blocs? Can they be adequately represented only by blacks and Hispanics? If so, why should not proportional electoral outcomes also be required for Poles, fundamentalists, dentists, libertarians? If Democrats in a Republican district can never elect a Democrat, are they inadequately represented? What happens to black Democrats in a district which elects a black Republican?

CURIOUSLY, and despite the clear drift of her own findings, even Abigail Thernstrom does not seem able to resist the longing to have it all. Thus, she is willing to go along with today's activists to this extent: if a jurisdiction with a substantial black or Hispanic population seems unlikely to elect a black or Hispanic in the near future, she believes action should be taken to see that it does. Where seats really seem "reserved" for whites, she thinks that electoral districts should be changed. She is also prepared to accept that changes in electoral procedures are wrong if, even inadvertently, they leave blacks or Hispanics with fewer seats than they had before the changes. Yet all of this cuts against the truth of which she herself reminds us: that the Constitution does not permit racially proportionate representation.

Unless Americans are prepared to amend the Constitution along Indian or Malaysian lines, with reserved places for different races, the only thing to do with a recalcitrant district is to work for a political solution. One does not cut off a head to cure even a severe migraine, though one cannot be sure the present generation of activists would shrink even from that prospect. Time has proved the power of the original Voting Rights Act. That is why there are few such recalcitrant districts to think about. Now it is usurpation of our Constitution that we must guard against, as Justice Brandeis warned us. Despite its few waverings, we are fortunate to have Abigail Thernstrom's *Whose Votes Count?* to remind us of that lesson.

Unsecular America

UNCONVENTIONAL PARTNERS: RELIGION AND LIBERAL CULTURE IN THE UNITED STATES. By ROBERT BOOTH FOWLER. *Eerdmans. 185 pp. $12.95 (paper).*

Reviewed by
RICHARD JOHN NEUHAUS

Unconventional Partners is, quite simply, one of the freshest interpretations of religion and American culture to have appeared in some years. Quite apart from its argument, the book is a bibliographical treasure trove of intelligent comment on almost everything that has been written about religion and culture in America over the past two decades, and more. The author is professor of political science at the University of Wisconsin in Madison. His thesis is that most intellectuals have profoundly, and often willfully, misunderstood the connections between religion and liberalism in American life. Against those misunderstandings, Fowler posits his idea of an "unconventional partnership."

Fowler begins with a 1977 observation by Daniel Bell: "From the end of the 19th century to the middle of the 20th century, almost every sociological thinker expected religion to disappear by the onset of the 21st century." Obviously, Fowler notes with studied understatement, that has not happened, and there is no sign that it is going to happen anytime soon, especially not in the United States. A host of secularization theories notwithstanding, America is very much "Unsecular America." That is not necessarily either bad news or good news. As Fowler amply documents, the confused and confusing role of religion in our culture is simply a fact, and scholars who ignore it are, to that very large extent, writing about a society other than America.

Among writers who have attended to the religion factor, Fowler contends that most have followed two dominant models. The two are "integration" and "challenge." The integrationist view stresses the ways in which religion shapes, reinforces, and reflects liberal society. The challenge view, which is on the ascendancy in some religious circles, stresses the ways in which religion criticizes and opposes the cultural order and its leaderships. Both views are woefully inadequate, Fowler believes. "I argue that religion in America has been, and continues to be, an *alternative* to the liberal order, a *refuge* from our society and its pervasive values. Yet, by providing that space from our liberal order, it unintentionally *helps* the liberal world."

Fowler is quite specific about what he means by "liberalism" and the "liberal order." First, liberalism is a commitment to skeptical reason; second, it is an enthusiasm, in principle and practice, for social tolerance; third, it is an affirmation of the central importance of the individual and individual freedom. The "liberal order," then, is the constellation of institutions which express and sustain that commitment, enthusiasm, and affirmation. Fowler says that the major institutions of our society are devoted to liberalism and the liberal order—with the important, although not consistent, exception of religion. It is the key to his argument that religion not only is but should be the exception—and precisely for the sake of the liberal order itself.

FROM the beginning, writes Fowler, there were indirect but nonetheless crucial connections between religion and the liberal order. Although none of the great European philosophers of liberalism from the 17th through the 19th centuries was an orthodox Christian (with the arguable exception of John Locke), the classical liberal thinkers, including the American Founders, had no doubt that religion was integral to liberalism in that it provided a necessary moral grounding for their preferred social

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order. At least in the American case, it was not religion-in-general that they had in mind, but a set of ideas and practices clearly derived, in however attentuated a form, from Calvinist Christianity. This claim is, of course, not original with Fowler. (Given the thoroughness of the literature surveyed, one misses any reference to A.D. Lindsay's *The Modern Democratic State.*)

But whatever the American Founders may have thought, few liberal thinkers after World War II paid the slightest attention to the role of religion in liberal culture. If they did mention religion, it was usually to assert that it was a vanishing phenomenon, or that it was purely private and therefore irrelevant to public life, or that religion and liberalism were antithetical. Now, however, there is a new band of social theorists, intensely interested in "community," who are dismayed by liberalism's inability either to provide such community or to account for it. As Fowler remarks, "For decades liberal thought lost interest in the question of what holds American society together—until it became clear that perhaps it is no longer holding together."

Those thinkers whose concern for community is now forcing them to take a second look at religion are almost uniformly of the "integrationist" school of thought. In Fowler's view, this is a big mistake. For religion cannot come to the rescue of liberalism simply by supplying a missing element which the liberal order happens to lack, and thus make it whole. Liberalism is not, as it were, completed by adding the religious dimension. Rather, religion makes bearable the *inevitable* and *irremediable* incompleteness and unsatisfactoriness of the liberal order.

Both liberal theory and liberal practice, according to Fowler, necessarily lack the community that human beings just as necessarily seek. Religion is thus not a supplement nor a challenge to the liberal order, but its alternative. It is, however, an experienced alternative, and one that, by making it possible for people to live with the inadequacies of the liberal order, becomes essential to sustaining that order. The argument is not untouched by elegance.

THERE are many parts to the case Fowler wants to make, and almost all of them deserve serious attention. In continuing the conversation to which he has made such an important contribution, I would press at least three questions: Does he not underestimate the radicalism of some who embrace the "challenge" model of religion's societal role? Is there not an important overlap between the model of religion as challenge and that of religion as alternative? Is it accurate to maintain, as Fowler does, that the way in which people live in two worlds, the liberal order and the religious order, is a "compromise"?

On the first question, Fowler subscribes to the view that all political contention in America, whether "liberal" or "conservative," takes place in fact within the boundaries defined by liberalism. But his definition of liberalism, described above, seems to me too formal and too broad. In Fowler's view, both Jesse Jackson and Jerry Falwell advocate positions that are solidly located in the liberal tradition. Perhaps so, but Jackson and Falwell hardly define the spectrum of positions in play.

On the Left, varieties of liberation theology in the churches directly and self-consciously repudiate liberal theory and practice. Fowler is undoubtedly correct in saying that proponents of such views have slight credibility with most clergy and laymen, and that the churches where such views are influential are fast becoming culturally marginal. He overlooks, however, the influence that these views, disseminated in more tempered form, exercise in morally "delegitimating" the liberal order. (In the political sphere, he also underestimates the degree to which the positions of a Jesse Jackson are themselves hostile to the institutions and habits of the liberal order.)

On the Right, Fowler fails to mention the evangelical and fundamentalist theonomists (more accurately called theocrats) who are opposed in principle to liberal democracy. The purpose of these re-

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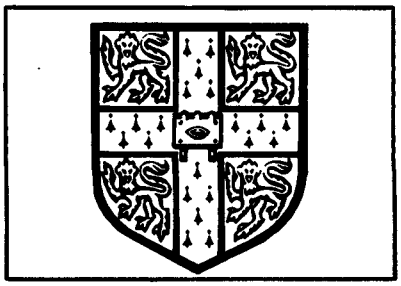

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constructionists, as they call themselves, is to restore "Christian America" on the basis of "Bible law." They are small in number and their influence is greatly exaggerated by the hysterical Left, but they do represent a kind of liberation theology of the Right that must be taken into account.

In addition, there are also in American religion those who are currently called paleoconservatives. They too are in principle opposed to liberalism and democracy, dismissed by them along with capitalism, as manifestations of the disease of modernity. Of course the paleoconservatives too are relatively small in number, but they clearly believe that authentic religion offers not, as Fowler says, a refuge from the liberal order but a place from which to wage war against it.

THE elaboration of my first question partially responds to the second. The challenge model and Fowler's alternative model do not seem to be so discrete as he suggests. Much depends upon whether the alternative provided by religion to the liberal order is one of affirmation, of rejection, or of indifference. And this leads to my third and most urgent question: whether, for the believer, simultaneous existence in the religious and liberal orders is necessarily to be described as a "compromise."

Fowler writes that "there will be costs if American churches and religions demand that their followers break from their compromise with the liberal order." Those who make such a demand commonly claim that in doing so they are being "prophetic." Fowler's hunch, however, is that most religious people, if faced with a choice between religion and the liberal order, will decide that, all things considered, their interests are better served by the liberal order. In his view, most religious leaders are sensitive enough, and sensible enough, not to demand such a choice. Therefore, despite the influence of secular intellectuals who ignore religion and of "prophetic" activists who politicize it, there is little prospect of the "disentanglement" of religion and liberal culture. "For better or for worse," Fowler concludes, "the rather remarkable relationship between religion and liberalism that I have described sails serenely on."

What Fowler neglects to note is that there are, in both Christianity and Judaism, venerable traditions of thought that understand the relationship between the secular and sacred orders in terms quite other than compromise. One thinks, in Judaism, of the distinction between the Noahide covenant and the covenant with the elect people. As Jewish scholars have argued, the relationship between the two covenants is analogous to the relationship in other traditions between natural law and revealed law. Christians speak, variously, of the civil and sacred realms, the twofold rule of God, the order of nature and the order of grace, or the City of God and the City of Man (Augustine).

These traditions make it possible for believers, *as believers*, to affirm the liberal order as the best way of conducting the temporal realm of the earthly *polis*. For them, religion is not a refuge or escape but the experience of a larger reality which itself provides warrants for a liberal ordering of the lesser reality that is worldly politics.

Of course this is not true of all believers, as witness the current insurgency of militant Islam. But I suggest it is the case with most believing Jews and Christians in America. Reinhold Niebuhr famously observed, "Man's capacity for justice makes democracy possible, but man's inclination to injustice makes democracy necessary." He was not saying that believers are compromised by accepting the liberal order. He was saying, precisely as a believer, that our religiously informed understanding of reality makes the liberal order necessary.

For another example, Fowler correctly notes that a hallmark of liberalism is tolerance of differences. Why do believers in this society tolerate others who differ on what is presumably the most important difference of all—our understanding of the will of God? One answer is that people are not very sure that they know the will of God, and are therefore disinclined to wage war on those who have a different understanding. There is no doubt much truth in that. But another, and I think deeper, answer is that most Christians and Jews in this liberal order are convinced that it is the will of God that we not kill one another over our disagreements about the will of God.

Fowler is surely right in saying that, for most believers, religion is "another place." Religion is the participation in a radically different "construction of reality" (Peter Berger). That difference must be "radically other" if it is to relativize the constructions of reality that rule in the areas we call secular. It is exactly in this relativizing or debunking of the pretensions of the political realm that religion most importantly serves liberalism, humbling it by reference to a greater and more binding order.

In sum, the "unconventional partnership" of Fowler's title is even more unconventional than he suggests. He is rousing and persuasive about the limits of liberalism and on the ways in which religion inadvertently supports such a necessarily limited liberalism. Perhaps in a future work he will explore the ways in which religion's support for the liberal order is decidedly advertent.

The Bland Bargain

CRASHING THE GATES: THE DEWASPING OF AMERICA'S POWER ELITE. By ROBERT C. CHRISTOPHER. *Simon & Schuster. 304 pp. 19.95.*

Reviewed by PETER BRIMELOW

ROBERT C. CHRISTOPHER'S amiable journalistic survey of the current state of the American ethnic union begins with the sort of bang that might be expected from a writer who was for many years an editor at *Newsweek*:

> On July 21, 1988, when a dark, compact man of vaguely Mediterranean appearance stepped up to the podium in Atlanta's Omni Coliseum to accept the Democratic nomination for the presi-

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dency of the United States, it seemed to some that American history had entered a new era.

Christopher then discreetly proceeds to qualify this popular view. He notes that although the emergence of Michael Dukakis, the son of Greek immigrants, was hailed as "the embodiment of the American ethnic dream," the nominee himself was in fact already deracinated to a considerable extent. Dukakis had been educated at elite schools, Swarthmore and Harvard. Significantly, he was technically no longer eligible to receive Greek Orthodox sacraments because his marriage, to a Jewish woman, had not been celebrated in a Church ceremony.

Moreover, Christopher adds, Dukakis's nomination had actually been preceded by a dramatic nationwide "disintegration of ethnic barriers." In the years since 1960, when John F. Kennedy became the first Roman Catholic to win the Democratic nomination and the presidency, non-Wasp white ethnics had unmistakably arrived in force throughout what Christopher calls the U.S. "power elite." The result, he believes, is an evolving cultural synthesis, at least at this highest social level, that cannot be identified with any ethnic group. It can only be called, he claims, "American."

Much of Christopher's book is devoted to an entertaining and perceptive account of this ethnic eruption. As he charitably says, it has happened so recently that scholars and journalists have not yet had time to adjust their long-cherished theories about prejudice and the persistence of ethnic stratification. In politics, the last thirty years have seen not only the first Catholic President but also the first black and Italian-American Supreme Court Justices and Cabinet officers and the first Jewish and Eastern European Secretaries of State. In business, surveys show that the proportion of Protestant executives in major companies is falling precipitously, and that a substantial majority of first-generation millionaires are now non-Wasp. In higher education, whereas an observer in 1966 remarked that not one in a thousand college presidents elected over the previous seventeen years had been a Jew, by 1987 top schools like MIT, Columbia, Dartmouth, Pennsylvania, Chicago, Michigan, and Princeton all had—or had had—Jewish presidents. And the Council on Foreign Relations, grimly agreed by Left and Right to be the linchpin of the American establishment, had acquired by 1986 a chairman, a president, and half a board of directors drawn from other than its traditional Wasp male clientele.

Christopher points out, however, that this process is no simple displacement of America's historic Wasp elite. Instead, all ethnic groups are merging. The notion of the melting pot has been out of favor with intellectuals since the 1960's, when "cultural pluralism" came into vogue. But in Christopher's view that pot has nevertheless been bubbling away with extraordinary vigor. And it is not even the modified "triple melting pot" hypothesized by some scholars, roughly refining Americans into Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish religious blocs. Intermarriage is dissolving all these distinctions. For example, about half of all American Catholics of Italian or part-Italian ancestry born since World War II have married non-Catholics, mainly Protestants. And whereas Jewish-Gentile unions were rare as late as 1963, when Nathan Glazer and Daniel Patrick Moynihan published their influential pluralistic study *Beyond the Melting Pot*, by the 1980's some 40 percent of Jews were intermarrying. Kitty Dukakis, in this respect at least, was setting a trend.

One telling symptom of this changing significance of ethnicity: non-Wasp politicians have been winning office, not by mobilizing their own ethnic bloc vote as previously, but by appealing to ideological supporters across ethnic lines. Thus there were eight Jewish Senators in 1987, as compared to one—New York's Herbert Lehman—in 1949. And four of them came from states where Jews constituted less than 1 percent of the population. Similarly, Dukakis's supposed special attractiveness to white ethnics did not prevent them from voting for George Bush. Christopher politely suggests that ridicule of Bush's "preppy" establishmentarian characteristics was actually a thin disguise for straightforward anti-Wasp animosity. But it did not work.

Academic sociologists will no doubt be irritated by the impressionistic and anecdotal support Christopher musters for his assertions. But there can be little doubt that he is on to something. In the late 1970's, President Carter told an Italian-American audience that the U.S. was not a melting pot but a minestrone—each ingredient contributing but remaining distinct. Christopher remarks drily that this was questionable even in culinary terms; sociologically, on the evidence presented here, it was a fashionable delusion on a par with America's alleged "inordinate fear of Communism."

Nevertheless, the phenomenon Christopher describes is open to a different interpretation, which he himself goes some way to developing. Despite its reputation, the Wasp elite, as he points out, was never really exclusive. On the contrary, it has shown throughout its history a remarkable ability to assimilate other groups so completely that their divergent origins become quite forgotten, such as Germans (Rockefellers), Dutch (Roosevelts), and French (Du Ponts). Christopher himself has an anglicized name; others of his forebears were Scotch-Irish, in colonial times a notoriously unruly and unpopular minority.

For the Wasps, absorbing fellow-Protestants from Northern Europe was obviously easier than swallowing the children of the immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe who arrived at the turn of the century. But it is at least arguable that the post-1960 "disintegration of ethnic barriers" is simply the latest leap of assimilation, bearing in mind that Wasp culture has itself relaxed considerably in the same period. Christopher refers repeatedly to the "brutal bargain," a phrase that Norman Podhoretz has used to describe the necessary submission of an earlier generation of ambitious ethnics to Wasp values. The bargain, in this account at least, now appears rather more bland.

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In fact, a determinedly cheerful blandness pervades Christopher's work whenever he comes close to confronting the harsher realities of the process he is describing. It is ultimately why *Crashing the Gates* remains an exercise in a minor key.

One reason for this blandness is Christopher's own seemingly complete innocence of anything resembling religious feeling. The idea that Wasps or Jews might actually have some reason other than sheer cultural inertia to want to see their children continue their faith seems never to have occurred to him. This, of course, makes intermarriage a much easier issue to contemplate. It may also explain the sweeping confidence that leads Christopher to dismiss in one paragraph the rise of "born-again" Protestants and anti-abortion Catholics—something obviously antithetical to his brave new irreligious "power elite"—as "essentially rearguard actions conducted by diehards in the lower middle class and working class."

BUT whatever his insensitivity to religious sentiment, Christopher is acutely aware of prevailing political emotions. This is most obvious in his treatment of the continuing failure of blacks, and to a lesser extent Hispanics, to achieve the ranks of the "power elite." (Asian immigrants are already doing so, and also intermarrying on an impressive scale.) Throughout the book Christopher undeviatingly ascribes this failure to "racism" on the part of whites. Ignoring the internal problems of the black community, he consistently maintains that blacks will join the mainstream if only that racism is eradicated. He does admit, however, that his attitude "smacks of pollyanna."

Similarly, Christopher rarely allows himself to dwell on any of the problems associated with the "disintegration of ethnic barriers" since the 1960's. He notices unhappily the paradox that this "disintegration" seems to have been accompanied by "affirmative action"—racial quotas—and bilingual education. But he has no insight to offer on the developing Lebanonization of America's "common culture," and quickly drops the topic.

This is particularly unfortunate because of the interesting role quotas have played in "de-Wasping" the American elite. Many top American schools were originally founded by one or another of the Wasp religious sects. When these schools were in effect nationalized earlier in this century, Wasps essentially lost control of their own major ethnic institutions. More recently, many of these schools have simultaneously imposed minimum entrance quotas for blacks and Hispanics and lifted or relaxed maximum quotas for Jews and Asians. Since quotas are a zero-sum game, this can only mean that Wasps (and white ethnics as well) are being squeezed out. In particular, the Wasp elite has less room to continue its invigorating transfusion of "scholarship boys" from the poor Anglo-Saxon hinterlands like Appalachia, an ethnic reservoir that Christopher for some reason says must be excluded from his discussion.

For example, Christopher reports that a third of the student body of his own alma mater, Yale, is now Jewish. Assume a black tenth and an Asian tenth (at least), and Wasps are already down to less than half of an institution they once owned—even before accommodating Catholics. In strict logic, quotas should be uniformly applied. But, says Christopher, "no educator of any substance has even by implication proposed such measures—if only because in the contemporary United States, it is impossible to advocate systematic discrimination against the members of any ethnic or religious group without incurring an intolerable degree of public obloquy." What this really means is that Wasps (and non-Jewish white ethnics) have not yet found a political language in which to protest that they they are in fact being systematically discriminated against. Christopher is not about to help them.

QUESTIONS of justice aside, does this matter? Does ethnic composition have consequences? Once again, Christopher takes refuge in blandness. For example, he notes that American academia has become steadily more left-wing in tone as non-Wasps have moved into the professoriate. But then he produces an astonishing explanation: political conservatism in academia has been shown to correlate with religious belief, whether Protestant, Catholic, or Jewish. And a conservative believer is necessarily at a disadvantage in academic competition with a liberal skeptic—because he "insists that a large body of dogma must be taken as given."

Actually, entirely secular liberals are extremely insistent on their own large body of dogma, as anyone can testify who has watched the hysteria that overcomes an officeful of American editors and journalists when any article discussing ethnicity or race is proposed. Under these circumstances, Christopher's bowdlerized and finally unserious account of this profound subject is probably about as much as can be expected.

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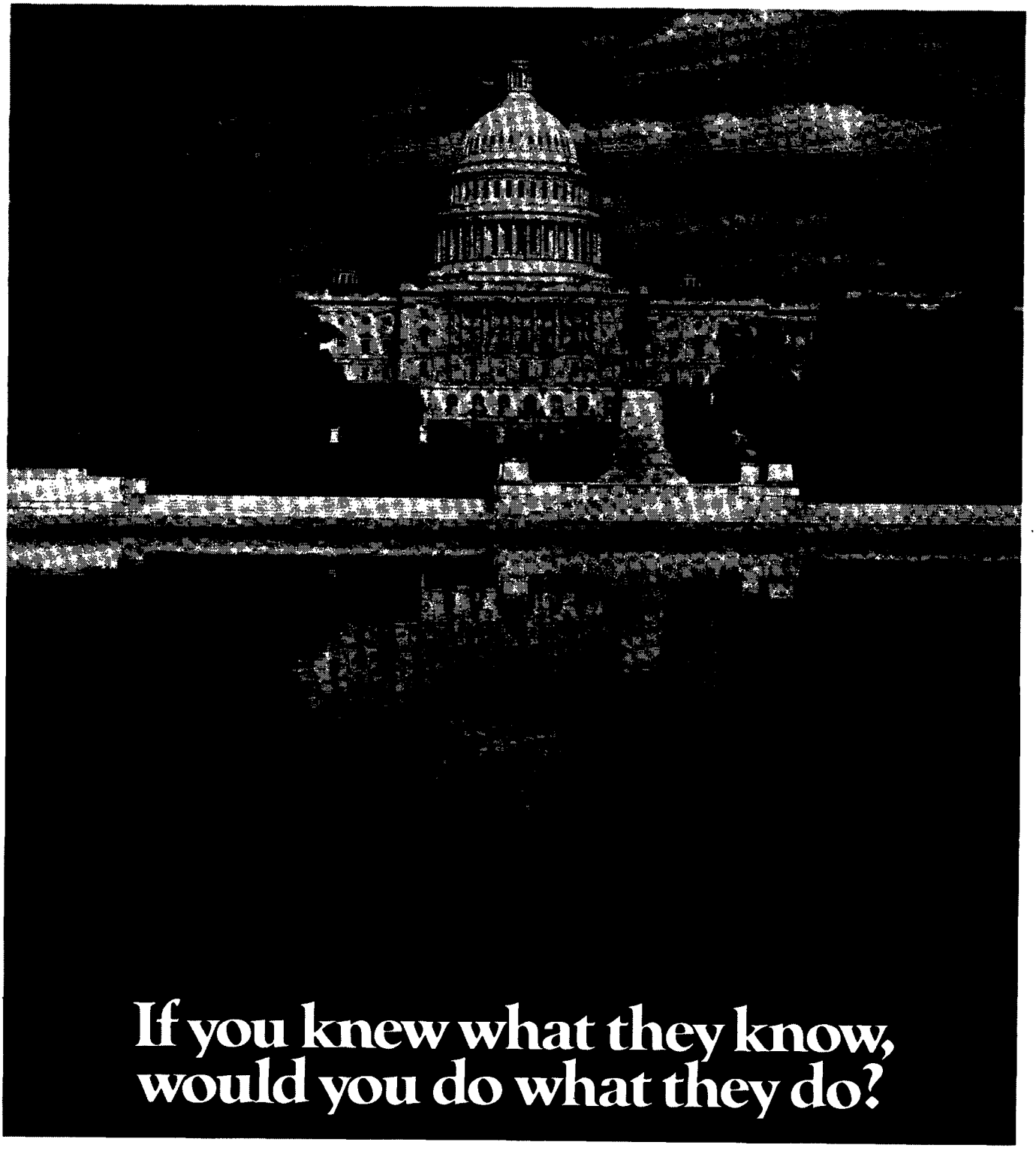

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